



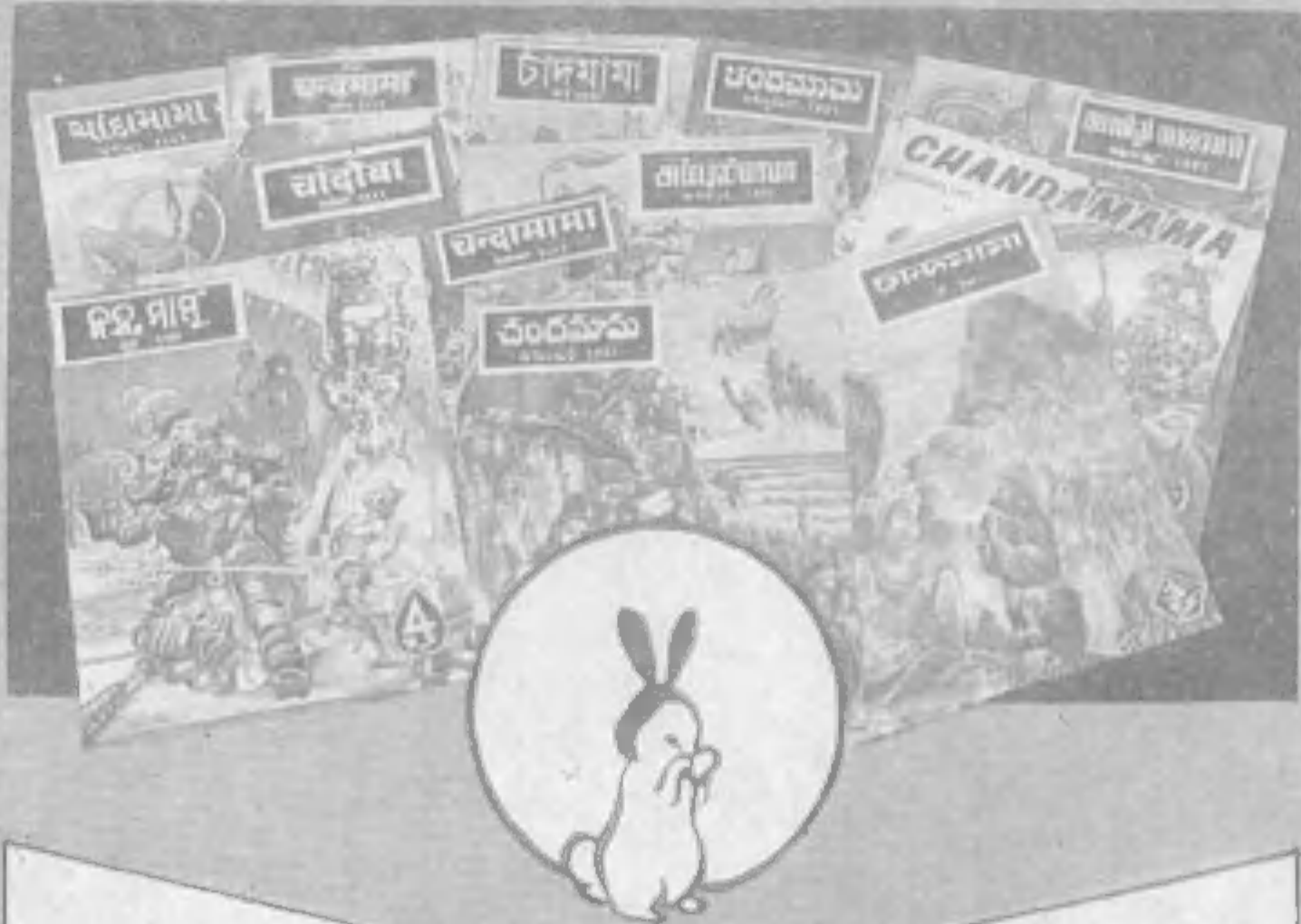
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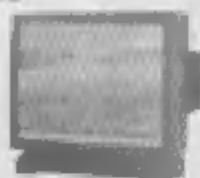
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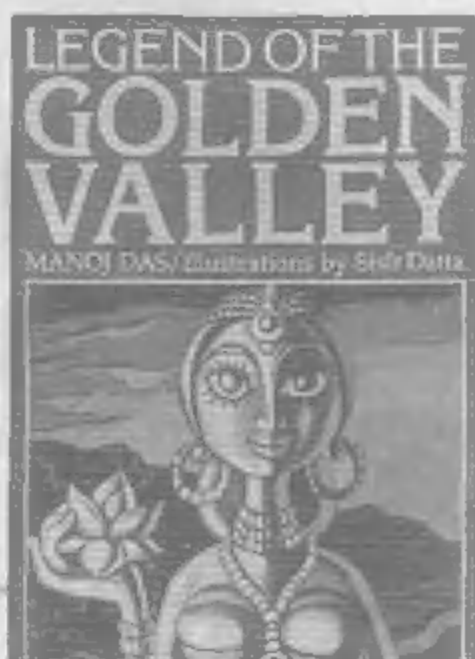
As the shipment of paper was delayed en route, and as it did not arrive till the middle of April because of transshipment difficulties, we are reluctantly skipping the April 1998 issue instead of bringing it out with great delay, and calling this the **May 1998** issue. We hope our readers will bear with us this unavoidable decision.

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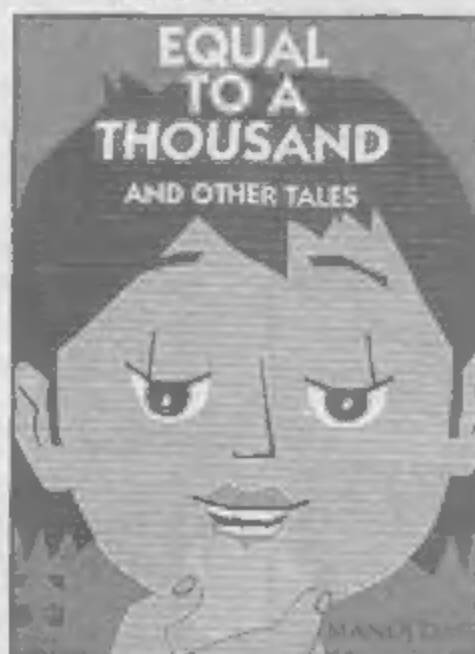
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Vol.28 June 1998 No.11

The Saga of 1857: The greater part of India rises in a mighty rebellion against the English East India Company. Resisting them are Rani Lakshmbal of Jhansi and Prince Nana Sahib. In Jagdishpur, Raja Kumar Singh proves to be a hero for the youths of Shahabad, the territory he ruled. Ere long, the English traders turned soldiers decide to strike at the Raja, who has set out to drive the English from not only his area, but from the whole of India.

Stories from the Mahabharata: Yudhishthira addresses the Kaurava ranks and says he would welcome anybody who would switch sides. Yuyutsu, a son of Duryodhana, joins the Pandavas. That is the signal for starting the war. Bhima pounces on the Kaurava armies. Bhishma engages Arjuna in a fierce battle. Swetha demolishes Bhishma's chariot. The patriarch's well-aimed arrow ends the prince's life.

The Virago of Veerpuri: After he gets the message from Bhanupriya conveyed to him by Vijaykrishna, Prince Veersen tries to meet Princess Valramukhi, whom the Prime Minister's daughter doubts is an impostor. The princess feigns illness, but promises to meet him later in the evening. A dagger has mysteriously been dropped among her clothes. It is for the "final" act which Raja wants her to carry out before midnight. The prince confronts Valramukhi, who insists that she is the princess from Mahendragiri. The prince keeps her engaged in conversation. The bell at the palace gates strikes the midnight hour. The prince is saved. But how? **PLUS** all the regular features like **They stood up to the British and Rivers of India**.

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• *Founder:* CHAKRAPANI
Controlling Editor: NAGI REDDI

WHEN TAJ MAHAL WAS PUT UP FOR SALE!

Can you believe this headline? We will not be surprised if you cannot—or if you think that we are joking. For, times have changed. The Taj Mahal is a great heritage, not of India alone, but of mankind as a whole. The Indian people and world institutions like the UNESCO would do everything possible to preserve it.

But the situation was different a hundred years ago. The East India Company had incurred huge expenses in fighting tooth and nail to suppress the Great Mutiny of 1857. How to make good the losses? Well, one of the avenues through which some money could come was to dismantle the Taj and sell the costly marble slabs to interested parties!

For your information, the great idea flashed not in the mind of any fool or villain, but in that of the Governor General of the Indian empire built by the East India Company.

Luckily, there were people among the authorities sensible enough to put a halt to the proposal.

But the idea itself was symbolic of the time that was—the eye with which the Company viewed India's art and sculpture.



Unpalatable, but they're eaten!

★ *Reader Aarati Chawla of Hoshangabad writes that she was baffled when she came across the expression "to eat one's words". What does it mean? she asks.*

It merely indicates a situation when one has to take back whatever one has said or uttered earlier. It is not denying what one has said where whatever one had said has been conveyed in a different way or with a twist which was not originally meant. Two friends suddenly decide to spend their vacation at a hill resort. They find that railway tickets are not easily available. One friend assures the other that he has an acquaintance in the Railways who might help and asks him to get ready for the journey. Not long after he comes back, crestfallen. The railway official cannot help as release of tickets is not within his powers. The friend warns the other: "Take care when you say anything; you might have to eat your words!"

★ *How can anyone "meet trouble half-way"? asks reader Venkatasubramaniam from Palani.*

It is nothing but unwise to anticipate a trouble or start worrying about it before it (trouble) shows itself up. If anyone has sure knowledge of an impending trouble, then, the wisest thing is to avoid the trouble erupting suddenly or catching one unawares. Hence the advice, do not try to meet trouble half-way.

★ *Reader Sankaramoorthy of Vijayawada wants to know the meaning of the phrase "gift of the gab".*

The expression simply means, a talent for speaking. Take the case of a lawyer, for instance. He has to argue the case before the judge in such a way that he gets a favourable verdict for his client. The lawyer normally puts forth all the points, cites precedence where similar points would have been decided by courts of law, and pleads extenuating circumstances by which his client deserves relief. But if the lawyer finds himself driven to one corner as the points he adduces have no strength before law as the precedences he quotes are not very relevant, and as the client has no case for redressal, then, if he is clever, he resorts to his gift of the gab and skirts the main issues and only tries to confuse the judge, so that his client can at least get the benefit of the doubt. It is not the actual art of speaking but his talent for speaking that may save the situation for him.

★ *When will anybody have "too many irons in the fire"? And what is the significance? Is the query raised by Anantram Pande from Pune.*

An ironsmith sits before the fire and strikes at the iron rod or plate he has just taken off the fire. It is red-hot and in that condition he can change its shape or bend it. When it is cold, the iron rod or plate is not malleable. This exercise has given birth to the expression: *Strike when it is hot*. And if the smith has too many irons in the fire, he cannot give the same attention to all the rods. His work will not be perfect. If one is engaged in too many enterprises at the same time, one is bound to fail in all of them, or at least in some of them.





THE VIRAGO OF VEERPURI

The story so far: Is Vairamukhi a real princess? Isn't she Vajreshwari, the missing daughter of Marthandvarma, once the army commander of Veerpuri and who was found dead under mysterious circumstances? The doubt in the mind of Bhanupriya has been taunting the Prime Minister's elder daughter. She waits for an opportunity to share her misgiving with Prince Veersen, whose guest the princess is in the palace. Meanwhile, Vairamukhi is alerted by "Raja" that the time for the final act is fast approaching. There is tension in the air. Where will it take the kingdom of Veerpuri?

After a gap of several days, Princess Vairamukhi received a message from Raja, while she sat alone beneath the banyan tree after her usual visit to the Kali temple. She heard his voice clearly, and he told her that the time was fast approaching for the final act. Though he did not

specifically say what it was, he made her understand that she was to meet Prince Veersen the next day and she would be carrying a dagger with her at that time. Raja has also assured her that his men would meet her three days after the 'deed' and she would be escorted out of Veerpuri and safely

taken back to Mahendragiri. Raja made it clear to her that the future of Mahendragiri rested on the success of her mission. Before his voice trailed off, he even hinted ■ rewards for her, and a bright future.

All this only left her bewildered for some time. Then she suddenly began shivering all over as if the significance of the message went deep inside her mind, though she did not remember many things that had happened in Veerpuri after she was taken there, and how she was responsible for some of the happenings.

When Ragini went and reminded her that it was time they returned to the palace, Vairamukhi meekly allowed herself to be escorted by Ragini and the two maids from the palace, Shalini and Malini.



After their brief visit to Princess Vairamukhi, the prince and his cousin Vijaykrishna proceeded to the Prime Minister's residence where they held long discussions with Bodheshwar, who detained them till he prepared the messages for King Soorasen who was still with the troops at the border. Ever since the mysterious death of the Army Commander, Marthandvarma, the king had taken over command of the troops and had been inspecting the borders to ensure that the sudden developments in the kingdom—first the death of Marthandvarma and then that of his sister Queen Suryaprabha within ■ few days—were not taken advantage of by any of the neighbouring kingdoms to cast ■ evil eye on Veerpuri.



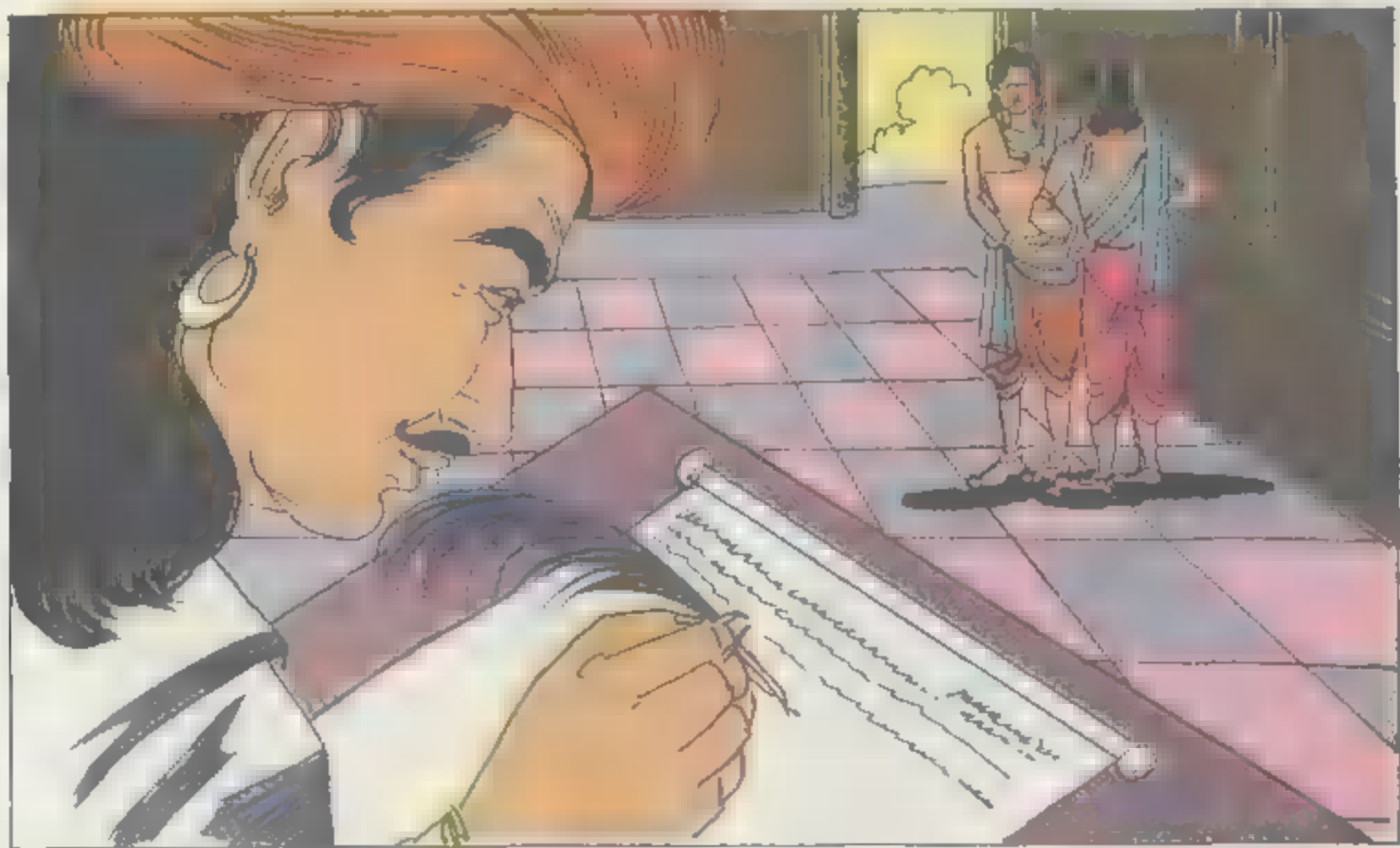
Marthandvarma's son, Vijaykrishna, was being secretly groomed by the king to take his father's position, and the young man had been giving company to the king at the border. He had returned to the capital for consultations with Prince Veersen and the Prime Minister and he was expected to go back the next morning carrying Bodheshwar's messages for the king.

Prince Veersen sent a guard to find out whether the Prime Minister's daughters, Bhanupriya and Bhanumati, had come back from their visit to Princess Vairamukhi. Awhile later he came and told the prince that they had returned. The prince reminded Vijaykrishna: "You haven't met them after your arrival, Vijay: you will be leaving for the border early tomorrow. So, it's better you

meet the sisters now. You go; I shall remain here with Bodheshwar helping him prepare the messages for my father."

"Yes, I think it's a good idea," said Vijaykrishna. "Otherwise I may miss them; and I don't know when I would be back in Veerpuri again." He then went out and made his way to that portion of the Prime Minister's residence used by the sisters.

He found Bhanupriya alone sitting in the verandah overlooking the garden and in a pensive mood. She turned around when she heard footsteps approaching. "Oh! It's you, Vijay?" she said voicing her surprise. "We heard that you have been here since yesterday, and we were wondering whether we would have an occasion to meet you before you went back to join the





king. You must have been busy with the prince and my father."

"Yes, Priya, the king had sent me here for consultations with the prince and the Prime Minister, and I wanted to complete my task before I took some time for myself. How're you? Where's Bhanumati?"

Bhanupriya did not attempt to answer those questions. Instead, she put on a mischievous smile and said: "But you had time to call on Princess Vairamukhi!"

"I had gone to fetch Veersen on our way here," explained Vijaykrishna, "and as she is staying in the palace itself, the prince wished that I met her before we both came here to meet your father. Veer must have told you, didn't he?"

"No! It wasn't the prince who told us about your visit," said Bhanupriya. "He merely sent word that Bhanumati and I should call on her, as he had brought her here only yesterday. Bhanumati taught her to play *shatranj*."

"Ah! That reminds me," said Vijaykrishna "the prince had sent her an ivory set and he wanted to find from her whether she liked it. That's how I happened to be with him."

"All that we learnt from her," said Bhanupriya. "Anyway, what do you think of the princess?"

"The moment I saw her," said Vijaykrishna, "I thought I had seen her earlier. The face is very familiar. But I can't place her."

"Don't you think she resembles Vajreshwari?" queried Bhanupriya.

"You mean my sister?" Vijaykrishna was breathless. "Now that you say, yes, she does resemble Vajreshwari. But she has been missing for long! And she was no princess. This is Vairamukhi from Mahendragiri."

"But Mahendragiri had no princess!" remarked Bhanupriya. "King Kirtichandra had only two sons—Pratapchandra and Vinaychandra. Neither of them is married. Pratapchandra fell from a horse and suffered physical disability. The younger Vinaychandra succeeded Kirtichandra because his brother declined to become king. And for all I know, Vinaychandra is not married as yet. So, where does Princess

Vairamukhi come in the picture of Mahendragiri?"

Vijaykrishna was now in a contemplative mood. Before he could respond to Bhanupriya, she said, "Vijay, I want to tell you something, in confidence. In fact, I haven't even told Bhanumati...that I happened to see some marks on the shoulders of Princess Vairamukhi, and I remember to have seen the same birthmarks on Vajreshwari. Only, I don't recall whether she had them on her left shoulder or right! I'm afraid, the princess is an impostor! Could she really be Vajreshwari? If so, what's her game? Is she playing it herself, or is she under the spell of somebody? Even the mention of the name Vajreshwari doesn't cause any reaction in her. And the princess had been a

guest in the palace even when the Queen was alive. In fact, she used to take the princess every morning to the temple of Bhuvaneshwari, the deity of Veerpuri. The prince's mother had a special liking for her."

Bhanupriya would have continued if a guard had not entered to say that Veersen was waiting for Vijaykrishna. "Tell him that I shall join him presently," said Vijaykrishna.

"You must find time to warn the prince," said Bhanupriya in a hushed tone, as she then saw Bhanumati approaching them.

"Have you been here for long?" Bhanumati asked Vijaykrishna. "Priya must have told you about Princess Vairamukhi visiting us, and our meeting her today. She has picked up *shatranj* just like that."



Vijaykrishna exchanged some plesantries with Bhanumati and excused himself. The sisters went up to the porch and saw both Vijaykrishna and Prince Veersen bidding good-bye to the Prime Minister. As he retraced his steps, the two joined their father. "Pity, Vijay can't stay for a day more to spend some time with us. The king must be waiting for his return with the messages.



The moment they were alone, Vijaykrishna said, in a whisper, "Do you think Princess Vairamukhi could be Vajreshwari?"

"What!" the prince could not believe his ears. "The princess...your sister? How could that be? She was introduced to my mother as Princess Vairamukhi from Mahendragiri and the Queen must have taken her to be a princess."

"Wait! said Vijaykrishna. And he told him all that he had heard from Bhanupriya. "If she is an impostor, you must be careful, Veer. She has

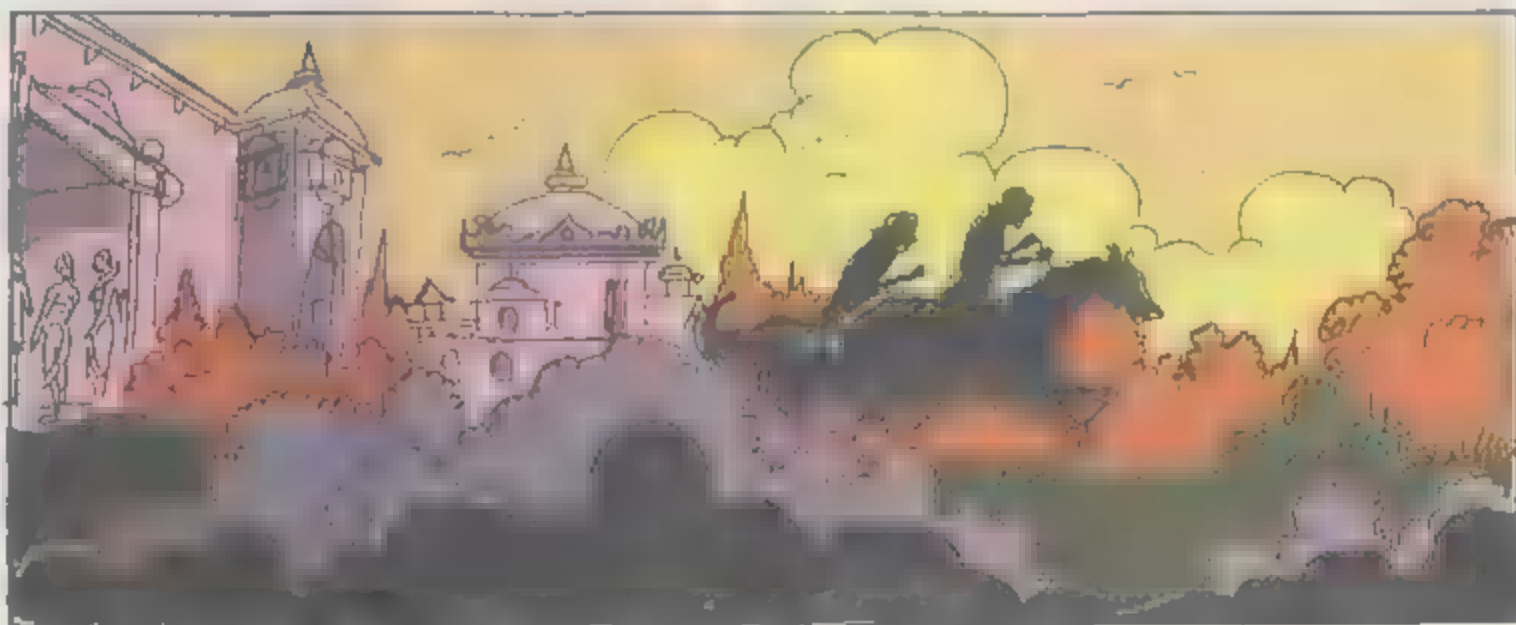
been a palace guest all these days, and you should not allow her to take advantage of your hospitality."

"It's now too late in the evening," said Veersen, "otherwise, we could have called on her. But you've to take rest before you prepare yourself for a long journey tomorrow morning. I shall see her after I see you off. Don't worry, Vijay, I shall take great care of myself."

Next morning, when he sent a messenger to find out if Princess Vairamukhi was in her apartments and would meet him, the girl came back and said, "The princess is not feeling well. She did not pay her usual visit to Devi Bhuvaneshwari, and is lying down. She wanted me to tell you that she will meet you after she returns from the Kali temple. If you won't mind, she would like to see you in your chamber, prince."

Veersen did not hesitate to give an answer. "Yes, tell her that I shall see her in my chamber. When she is ready, I shall have her escorted to my room."

(To conclude)



India's 12th Prime Minister

Wouldn't you like to befriend someone who loves to keep cats and dogs as pets, and who considers the *Panchatantra* stories as his favourite? Such a person is Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, who took over as India's 12th Prime Minister in March.

He was born on the Christmas night of 1926. At that time, his father and mother and brothers and sisters were staying in a house in Gwalior, almost adjacent to a church. The Christmas bells were ringing when Krishna Devi, wife of Krishna Behari Vajpayee, gave birth to their fourth son and sixth child. They named him Atal, meaning 'firm'.

Though his father, Shyamlal, was a wealthy landowner of Badeshwar in Agra, Krishna Behari chose to lead the simple life of a teacher. When he was offered the regular job of a teacher, he and his family moved over to Gwalior where he at first rented a house near the main entrance to the famous Gwalior fort. Later, he built a modest house in an area called Shinde-ki-Chavni, where the ruler of Shinde had once stationed his troops. The house was named "Krishna Kripa", and it is where Atal was born.

Krishna Behari was an affectionate father, but at same time a disciplinarian. He wanted his children to sit for their studies around the lone hurricane lantern that the family could

spare. He was against discriminating one child from the others. They equally enjoyed the meagre facilities their father could give them. He insisted that the children stayed together and grew together. Even after the passing away of his brothers, Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee makes it a point to be present at family re-unions during Diwali and other festive occasions like Raksha Bandhan, when he invariably finds time to play with the children in the 70-strong family. Incidentally, he has remained unmarried.

Krishna Behari's ambition was that his sons should all take up govern-



ment jobs under the British. The elder three abided by his wish. The youngest, Atal, had different views. While in college, he had a leaning towards communist ideologies, and became an active member of the All India Students Federation—the youth wing of the Communist Party. Later a change came over him and he joined the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. He became one of the founder members of the Jan Sangh—an offshoot of the RSS—founded by Shyam Prasad Mookerjee in 1951. Politics led him to the parliament, which he entered for the first time in 1957. He was one of the four Jan Sangh candidates to win the election to the Lok Sabha.

In the 1962 elections, he suffered defeat at the hands of a Congress candidate, but avenged the defeat in 1967. Both in 1971 and 1977, he won from his home constituency of Gwalior. He again won in 1980, but in the 1984 elections, he lost in Gwalior. In 1989, he won from both Lucknow and Vidisha; in 1991 and 1996, and in the mid-term elections in February this year, he won from Lucknow.

He headed the Jan Sangh during 1968-73, but soon after the Emergency in 1975-76, he and his followers joined the Janata Party, which swept the elections in 1977 and formed the first non-Congress government at the Centre. After he was sworn in as a minister, Prime Minister Morarji Desai asked him what portfolio he would prefer, and Atal Behari Vajpayee did not think twice before he said 'External Affairs'. As Minister for Foreign Affairs, one of his first acts

was to strike a new friendship with Pakistan which had suffered a humiliating defeat in the 1971 Indo-Pak war, leading to the erasing of East Pakistan from the political map of the sub-continent and the birth of Bangladesh. For six years, the two countries had remained sworn enemies. Shri Vajpayee also created a record by addressing the U.N. General Assembly in Hindi.

When the Congress came back to power in January 1980, Shri Vajpayee, now in the Opposition, formed the Bharatiya Janata Party and became its first President.

In 1994, he was conferred with the Gobind Ballabh Pant Award for the Best Parliamentarian. The citation described him as a forceful orator, erudite politician, a selfless social worker, litterateur, poet, journalist, a multi-faceted personality and, above all, an eminent national leader. It is reported that India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had once prophesied that Shri Vajpayee would hold the same high office. He did, though for a short period of 13 days when he, as India's ninth Prime Minister, headed a minority government in May 1996. He got a second chance when he was sworn in as head of the Government on March 19 last.

Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee likes to watch movies in theatres, and hockey and football on the field, and includes *Bhagavad Gita* and *Ramcharita Manas* by Tulsidas as his other favourite reading. To be honest in life is his motto; and his ambition is to make India a great nation.



STORIES FROM MAHABHARATA

The story so far: When Duryodhana asks his renowned warriors how long it would take to destroy the Pandava armies, the elders were cautious in their assessment, but Karna boasts and asks for just five days time. Arjuna tells Yudhishtira that it would not be possible for him to set a date to destroy the Kauravas.

The longer Arjuna looks at his kith and kin in the battle, the heavier becomes his heart at the thought of having to kill them, and his mighty bow begins to slip from his fingers. Arjuna picks up courage only when Lord Krishna consoles him by asking him to do his duty and not to care for the fruits thereof.

Much to the delight of the Kauravas, Yudhishtira walks to the opposite side to seek the blessings of Bhishma and Drona. Lord Krishna tries in vain to woo Karna to the Pandava side. One of the sons of Duryodhana leaves the Kaurava ranks and joins the Pandava army in response to Yudhishtira's call. Now read on...

Bhima began to fight. Roaring like a fierce lion he pounced upon the Kaurava armies and began to scatter them like dry leaves. To face his onslaught came forward Duryodhana, Duhshasana and Durmukha. From the Pandava ranks came the Upapandavas, Abhimanyu, Nakula, Sahadeva and Dhristadyumna to assist Bhima.

Lord Bhishma and Arjuna were

locked in a fierce battle. Similarly, Satyaki engaged Kritavarma and Abhimanyu fought Brihatpala. Bhima faced Duryodhana, Sahadeva chased Durmukha, Yudhishtira opposed Salva, Dhristadyumna traded blows with Drona, Ghatotkacha wrestled with Alamba, Sikhandi took on Aswathama, Virata struck Bhagadatta, and Drupada shot arrows at Saindara.

41. UPS AND DOWNS ON THE BATTLE-FIELD

The Kauravas and the Pandavas fought fiercely. Under the inspiring command of Lord Bhishma, the Kaurava armies fought well and inflicted severe damages on the Pandava legions.

When the sun rose to the meridian, the mighty Bhishma drove his chariot right through the centre of the Pandava ranks. He was followed by Durtmukha, Kritavarma, Kripa, Salya and Vivimsati.

Abhimanyu raced up to challenge the old patriarch and with his carefully aimed barbs cut the latter's pennant, and killed a number of warriors. Seeing him lonely, Bhima, Virata, the two Virata princes, Satyaki and Dhristadyumna, rushed forward to lend him their armed support.

Uttara rode into the battle on an elephant and attacked Salya. But the

latter fought so well that the young prince fell down headlong from his perch, and was in danger of being captured. At once his brother Sweta dashed forward and routed the Kaurava warriors who were trying to capture Uttara.

Bhishma came to the aid of Salya and showered his arrows on Sweta. The other Pandava soldiers swooped down upon the combatants and ranged themselves alongside Sweta.

Bhishma, retreating a little, turned his chariot round and charged at the exposed flank of Sweta. But the young prince did not show any fear and massacred a number of Kaurava soldiers. Even the mighty Bhishma gave way before such furious assault. But when it seemed as though the old warrior would have to surrender or get killed, he rallied round and with a



fresh burst of fire, destroyed Sweta's chariot.

Undaunted Sweta jumped clear of the ruined vehicle and swirling his mace high above his head, hurled it at Bhishma's chariot and completely destroyed it.

At once Bhishma commandeered another chariot and rushed on the young prince who now stood alone on the battlefield. Satyaki and Abhimanyu fighting in another corner of the field saw the plight of the young prince and advanced rapidly. But Bhishma, with a well-aimed arrow, ended the gallant prince's life.

At once a great cry of joy rose in the Kaurava ranks and the Pandava legions became downcast at their great loss.

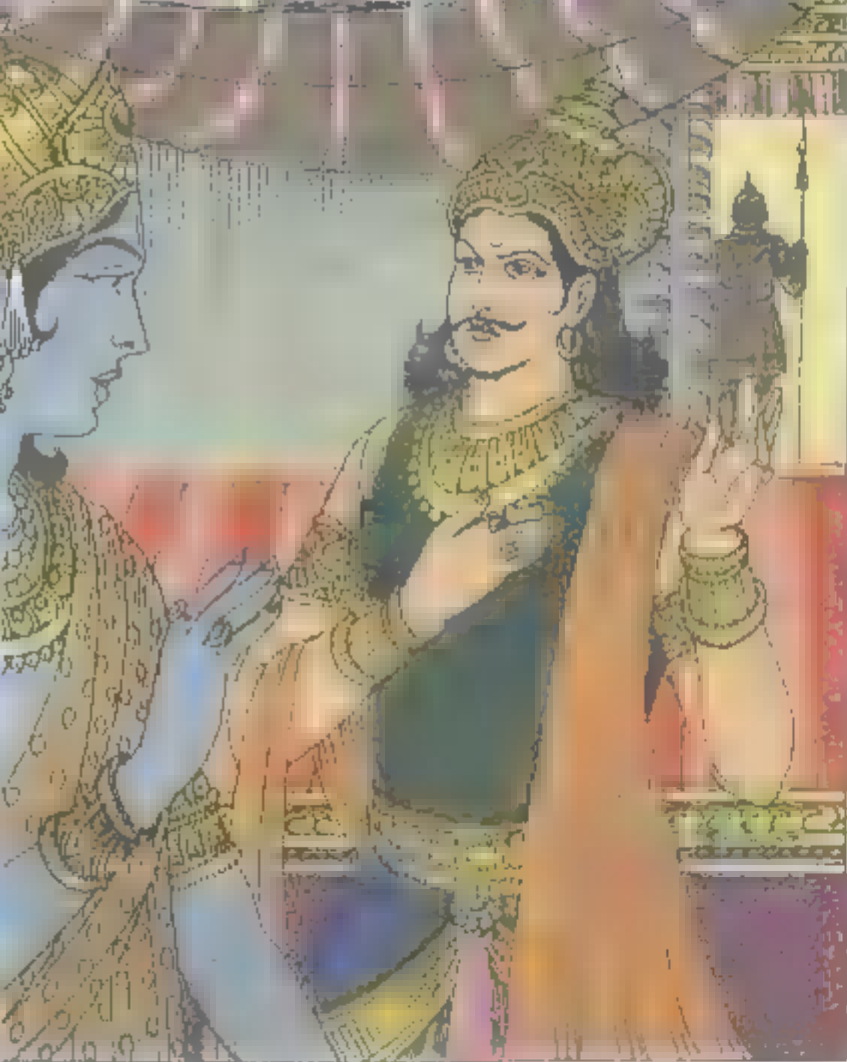
Sweta's brother Sanka, bursting with thoughts of revenge, fell upon

Kritavarma and Salya. Arjuna came to his aid and promptly Bhishma turned his attention on the famed archer. Salya destroyed Sanka's chariot, and the latter was transferred to Arjuna's chariot. Bhishma now attacked Drupada and the Pandava ranks shivered at the gory deeds of the great and redoubtable warrior.

At the setting of the sun, the two sides stopped their fight and retired to their camps. There was great jubilation in the Kaurava camps and Duryodhana bubbled with joy at Bhishma's valour and magnificent fighting.

In the Pandava camp, gloom descended on all. Yudhishtira spoke out his thoughts to Lord Krishna : "Krishna, today's battle has benumbed me. At this rate Bhishma will kill all the Pandava warriors. When we know





the inevitable, why should we fight on? Why not stop the battle and prevent further bloodshed?"

Lord Krishna consoled Yudhishtira: "Yudhishtira, you must not lose heart. All your brothers are valiant warriors. Moreover, you are surrounded by such great fighters as Satyaki, Virata, Drupada, and Dhristadyumna. There is no cause for anxiety. Bhishma will be slain by Sikhandi. Don't forget that!"

Dhristadyumna interposed and said, "O Yudhishtira, I have sworn to kill Drona. I shall fight relentlessly against Kripa and Salva."

Then Yudhishtira, taking heart at such words and casting off his gloom, said: "Let the Pandava legions be

formed in the shape of a Krauncha bird. Our enemies will not be able to penetrate our ranks. It was Brihaspati, the High Priest of the gods, who had taught this formidable formation to Indra."

As the pearly dawn broke over Kurukshetra, the rival armies began to stir and make preparations for the battle.

Duryodhana saw to his utter dismay the dreaded Krauncha formation of the Pandava armies. Drupada stood at the beak with Bhima and Dhristadyumna guarding the wings. Yudhishtira was the guardian at the rear.

When Bhishma was informed of the new war tactics, he reset his own formations and advanced to face the attack. He then set about demolishing the carefully formed Pandava legions. Arjuna was determined to fight the old patriarch. He drove his chariot forward and soon his arrows began to take a heavy toll of the Kaurava lives. So great was his prowess that even warriors like Salva, Aswathama and Kripa fell back and turned their chariots round. Intending to surround him, they called upon Duryodhana to help them. Promptly he despatched a whole division to fight against Arjuna. But Arjuna proved more than a match for him, and his arrows caused a severe dent in the Kaurava formations.

At once Duryodhana went to Bhishma and said: "Grandfather,

Arjuna is killing a whole lot of Kaurava warriors. If Karna had been here, he would have blunted Arjuna's attack. However, you must now put an end to Arjuna's life."

Bhishma replied, "To fight is my duty. There is no room for sentiments."

Then he got into his chariot and rushed towards Arjuna. Soon a battle-royale raged between the two great heroes. The chariots of both were damaged, and the horses were killed. Even the charioteers were not spared. Arjuna was pained to see Lord Krishna bleeding from wounds sustained in the engagement. Furiously he shot his bolts at Bhishma, and killed the latter's charioteer. Though the battle went on for long, victory came to neither.

In another part of the field, Dhristadyumna and Drona fought a long drawn out battle. But soon Dhristadyumna grew weak. But for the presence of Bhima, he would have lost his life.

Duryodhana sent Kalinga to attack Bhima. Soon the Pandava colossus and the Kauravas were locked in a titanic struggle. But the issue was never very long in doubt. With great ease Bhima despatched Kalinga and his three sons to the world of death and inflicted extensive damage on the enemy troops.

Bhishma, hearing about the death of Kalinga, swooped on Bhima but was opposed by Satyaki and Dhristadyumna. Bhima lost his chariot and got into Dhristadyumna's vehicle. Satyaki killed Bhishma's charioteer, and the horses galloped off in wild confusion taking the old warrior to another part of the expansive ground.

Satyaki came to Bhima and said: "Bhima, well done. You fought very well. You killed Kalinga and his sons singlehanded. Great work, indeed."

Bhima stroked his moustache in a pleased manner on hearing such compliments.

-To continue



Rani Chennamma

• TEXT MEERA UGRA
• ARTIST GOUTAM SEN

KITTOOR WAS A SMALL BUT PROSPEROUS PRINCIPALITY IN SOUTHWESTERN INDIA.



ITS RULER SHIVALINGA RUDRA SERJA DIED IN 1824 AFTER ENTRUSTING HIS ADOPTED SON TO THE CARE OF HIS (SERJA'S) STEP MOTHER, CHENNAMMA



THE BRITISH POLITICAL AGENT IN DHARWAD MR. THACKERAY WOULD NOT ACCEPT THE RAJA'S ADOPTED SON AS THE HEIR.

SEND WORD TO THE RANI THAT WE'RE ANNEXING KITTOOR



AND A FEW DAYS LATER

RANI SAHEB, THE ENGLISH HAVE SEALED OUR TREASURY



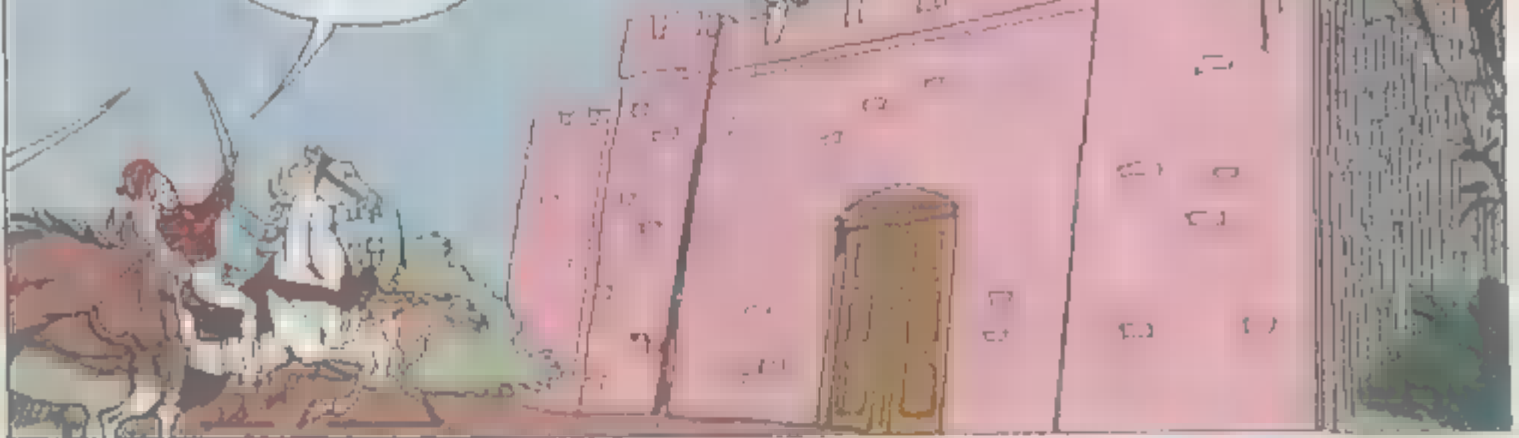
WE'LL TEACH THEM A LESSON GURU SIDDAPPA THEY CANNOT SWALLOW OUR STATE SO EASILY



BOTH SIDES PREPARED FOR BATTLE ON OCTOBER 23, 1824, THACKERAY MADE HIS MOVE—

NO! QUEEN CHENNAMMA'S ORDERS ARE NOT TO LET YOU IN!

OPEN THE GATES!



TELL YOUR QUEEN SHE HAS TWENTY MINUTES TO SURRENDER. OR ELSE FACE THE FIRE



EVERYONE WAITED WITH BATED BREATH FOR THE QUEEN'S RESPONSE WHEN THE TIME WAS ALMOST UP

CHARGE!

ATTACK!

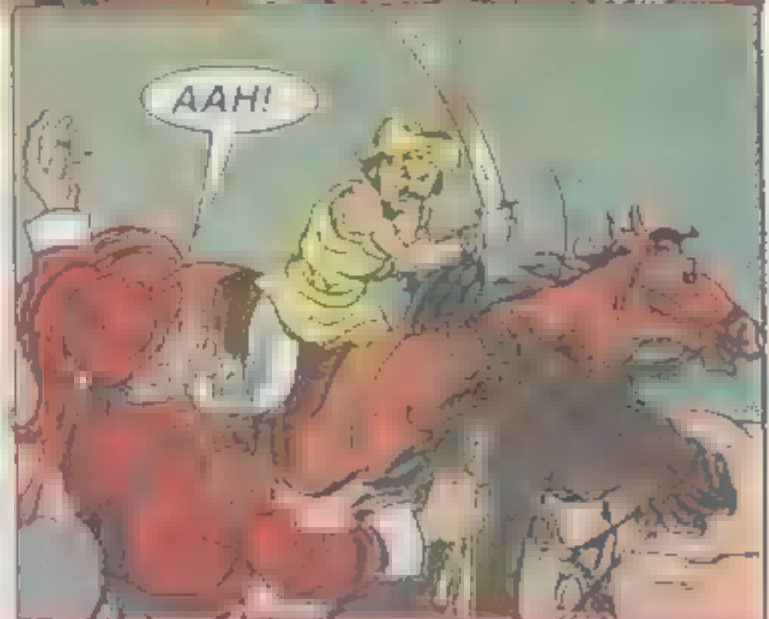


THE SUDDEN ATTACK TOOK THE ENGLISH BY SURPRISE

WHAT THE !

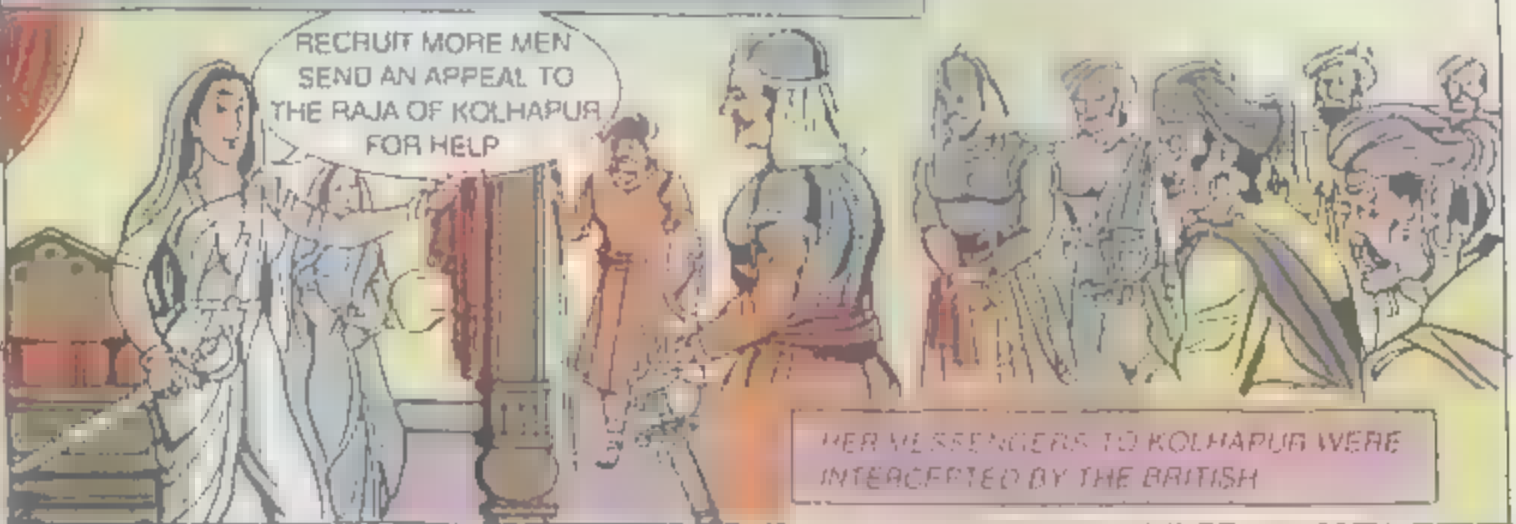


AAH!

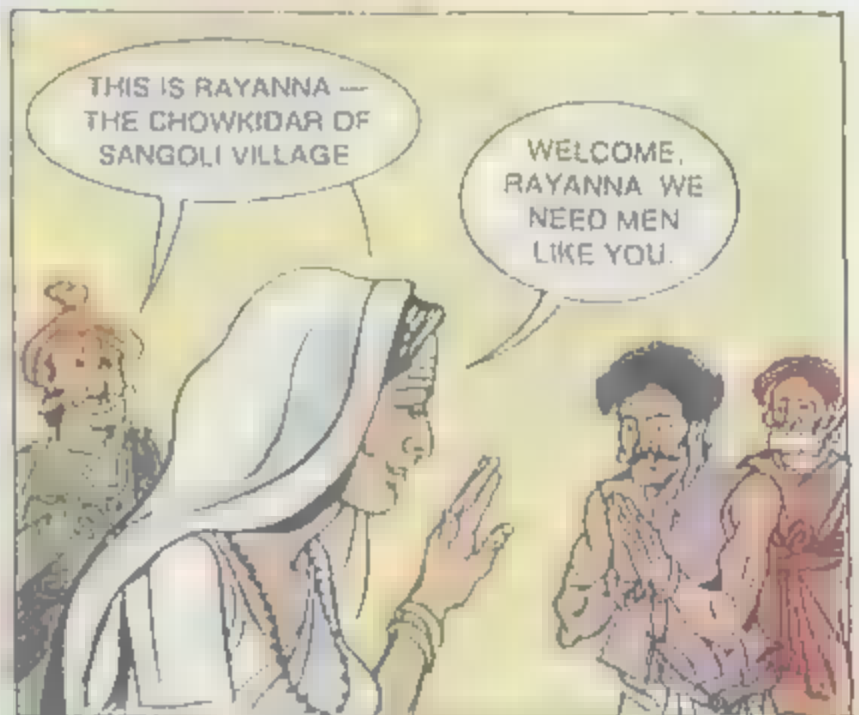
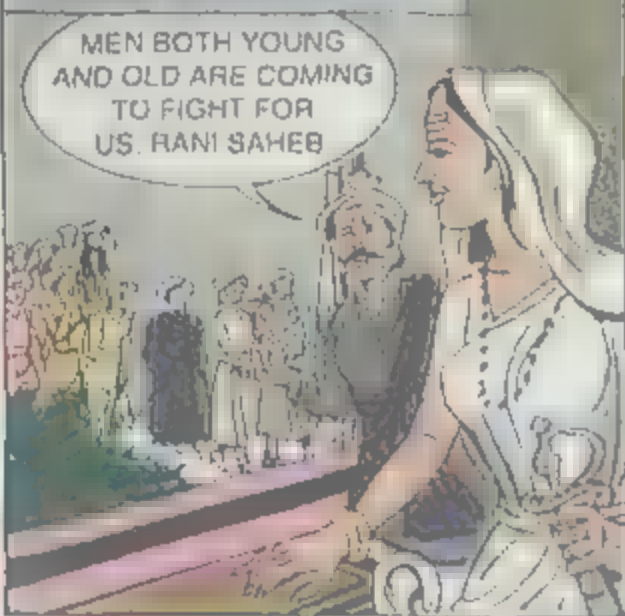


THE ENGLISH WERE ROUTED AND AMONG THOSE KILLED WAS MR THACKERAY

BUT CHENNAMMA KNEW ANOTHER BATTLE WAS INEVITABLE



BUT HER SUBJECTS RALLIED
AROUND HER —



ON DECEMBER 1, COLONEL MACLEOD BESIEGED
THE FORT WITH 25,000 MEN AND SEVERAL GUNS

THE FORT IS STRONG, AND THE MEN FIERCE
FIGHTERS... BUT PERHAPS I COULD BRIBE
SOMEBODY INSIDE TO HELP ME

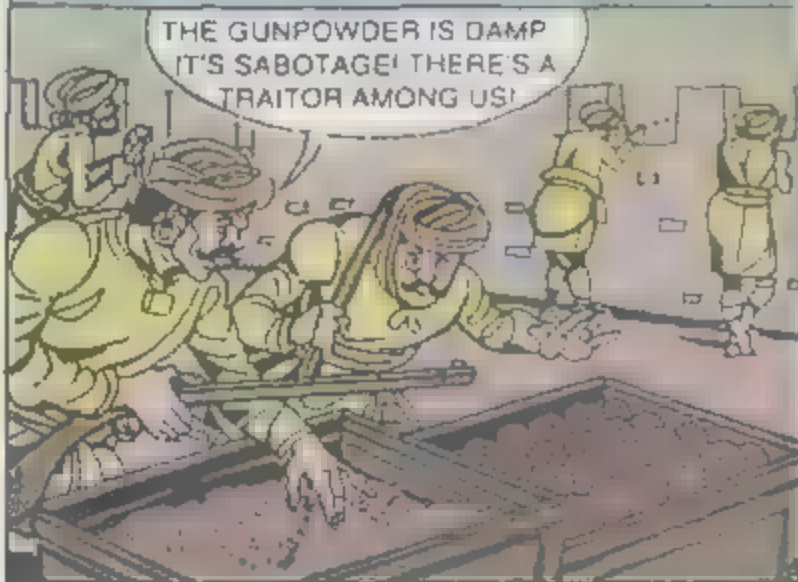


TWO DAYS LATER THE
ENGLISH BEGAN
SHELLING THE FORT...



...AND CHENNAMMA'S MEN FOUND TO THEIR HORROR THAT THEY COULD NOT FIRE BACK.

THE GUNPOWDER IS DAMP
IT'S SABOTAGE! THERE'S A
TRAITOR AMONG US!



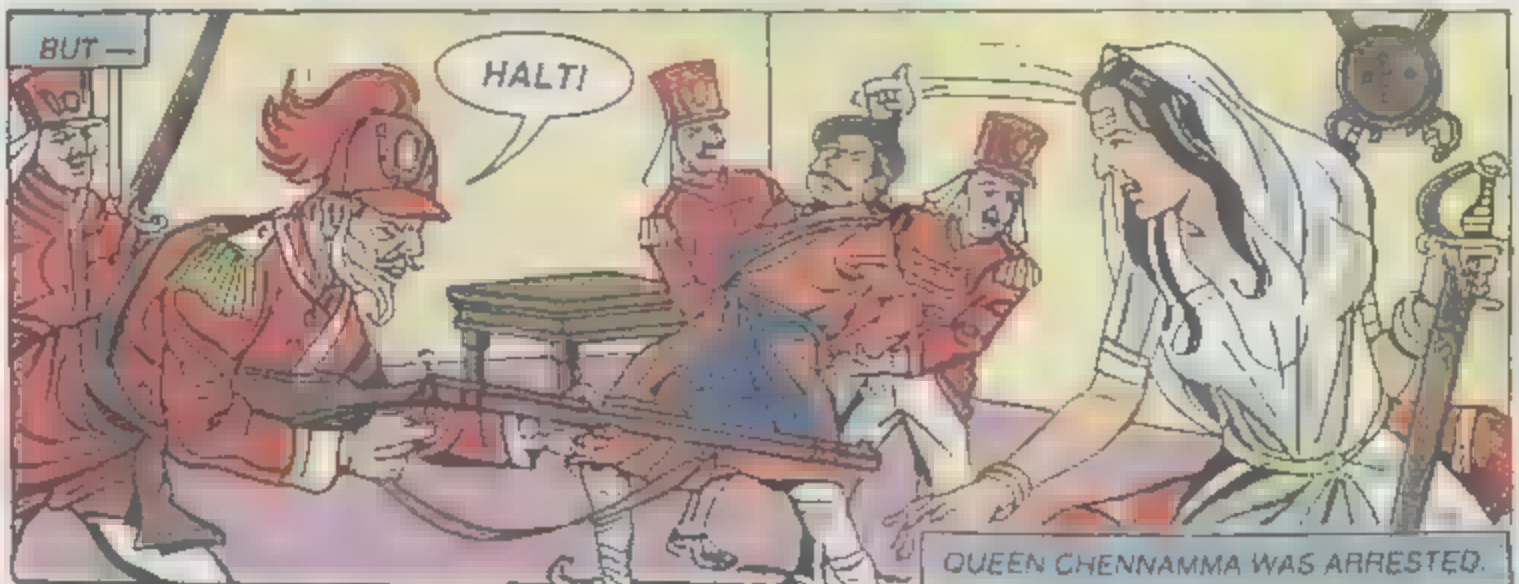
BY THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 11, THE
FORT WAS AS GOOD AS LOST.

THE ENGLISH WILL
BE HERE ANY MOMENT.
RANI SAHEB, YOU MUST
ESCAPE. COME!

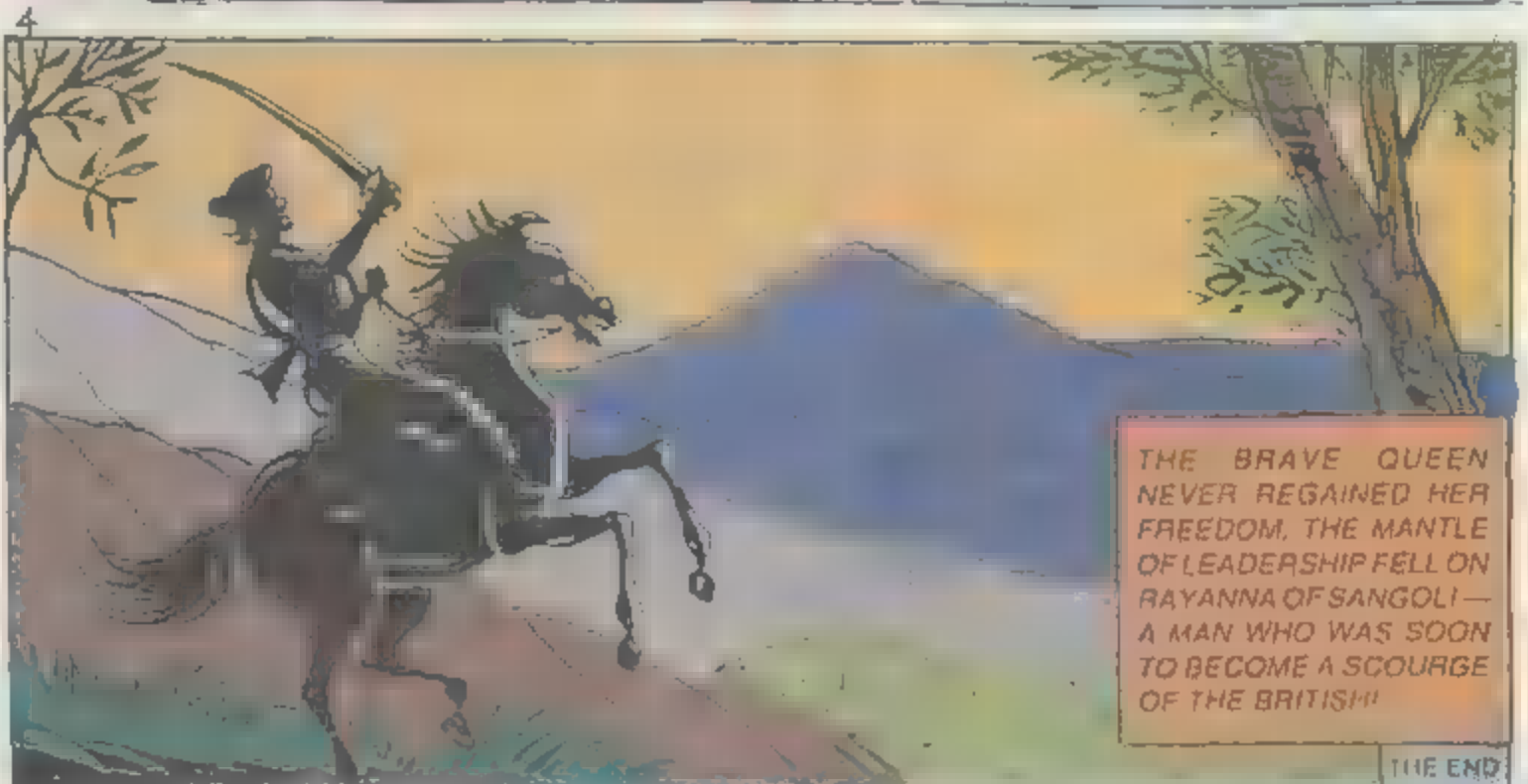


BUT —

HALT!



QUEEN CHENNAMMA WAS ARRESTED.



THE BRAVE QUEEN
NEVER REGAINED HER
FREEDOM. THE MANTLE
OF LEADERSHIP FELL ON
RAYANNA OF SANGOLI —
A MAN WHO WAS SOON
TO BECOME A SCOURGE
OF THE BRITISH!

THE END

The Saga of 1857



The narration so far: A great rebellion against the English East India Company takes the greater part of India by storm. No doubt, it was begun by some sepoys, but soon the princes and peasants, nobles and common men of different walks of life, join it. The foremost among the leaders of the rebellion are Nana Sahib and Lakshmibai, the Rani of Jhansi. The previous issue narrated the English assault on the fort of Jhansi.

Even after the English army, under the leadership of Sir Hume Rose, destroyed the gun-powder stored in the fort, soldiers, men and women who were in the fort continued to fight. Those English soldiers, who took the risk of climbing the ladders in order to cross into the fort, were pushed down to meet their doom.

Inside the fort the well providing drinking water to the inmates and soldiers had been destroyed by the

enemy's cannon balls. Another well had dried up. There was no water to drink. Rani Lakshmibai opened a room in which had been preserved potfuls of water from river Ganga. "Let this sacred water quench our thirst and take charge of our souls if we die!" she said.

After four of their captains had died while trying to climb the ladder, the company's army retreated for the night. At their camp they sat down to

plan their next strategy.

"Look here, boys," Sir Huge told his captains, "we have already lost some of our most capable soldiers. If Jhansi alone claims so many of our men, how are we going to suppress the rebellion at so many other places? Our future in India depends on our victory or defeat at Jhansi. We must enter the fort tomorrow, but what is even more important, we must capture the Rani alive. That is the biggest trophy we can win. Kill everybody else, but not the Rani. You may, by all means, inflict injury on her. If we can keep her alive and make her express regret and crave for our pardon, that will be a lesson for all the other princes. By the way, whoever can catch her alive will receive a big reward!"

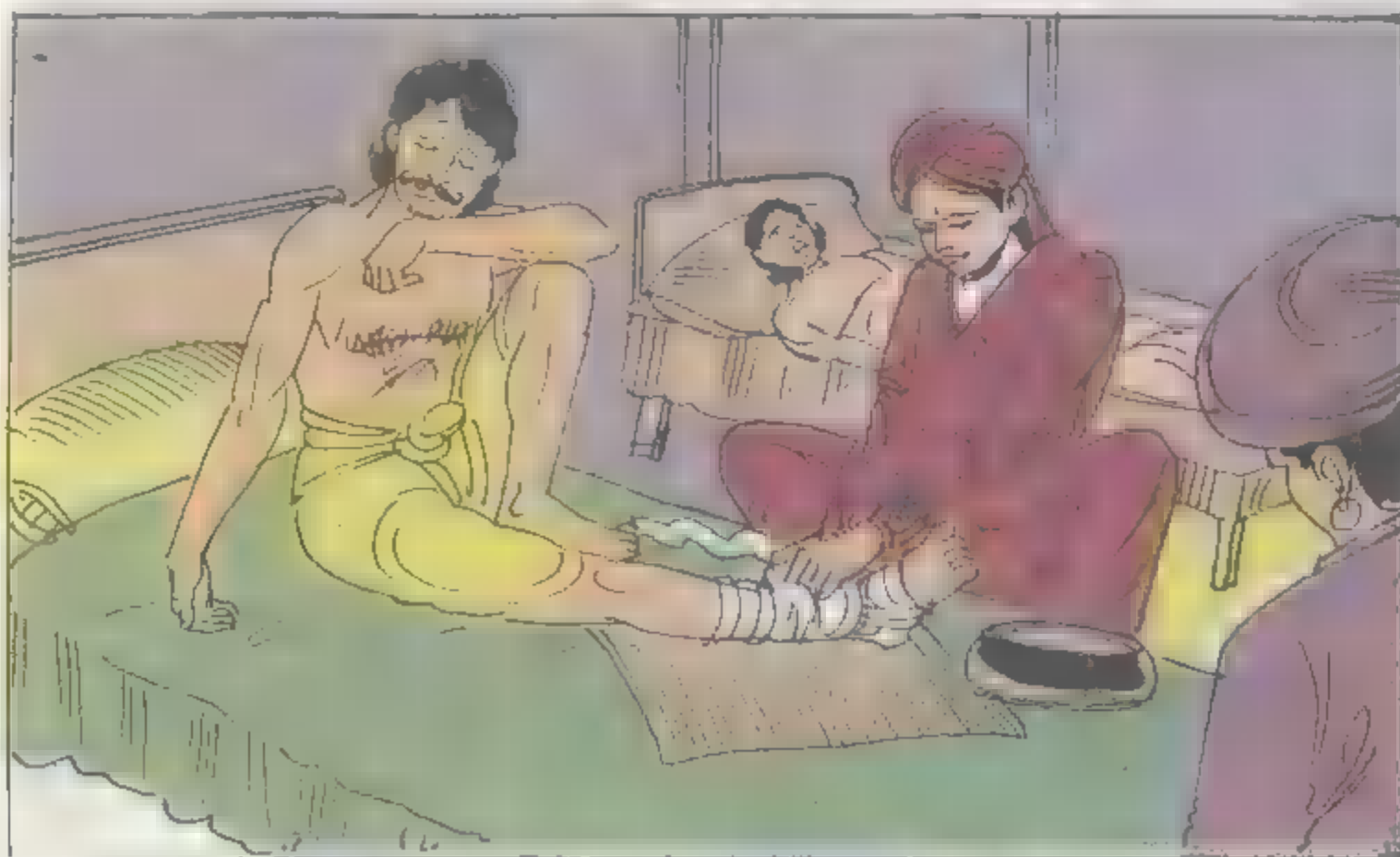
While this discussion was going

on in the English camp, inside the fort a group of nobles met the Rani who was nursing some wounded men and women.

"Mother," they said, "this is not the time for us to mince words. It is certain that tomorrow the foreigners will enter our fort. Without gunpowder, it will be impossible to check their invasion. You have done what no king or queen of any kingdom of India could have done. But we would not like you to be killed by them."

"Must you grudge me the glory of dying while fighting?" asked the Rani in an affectionate voice.

"Mother! Let us wish that this land of ours will give birth to many heroic souls, but we doubt if there will ever be another to match your glory. Well, we know full well that you do not care



for death, but what worries us is the possibility of our brutal foes capturing you and humiliating you," said the chief of the nobles, getting over his hesitation.

The Rani closed her eyes and perhaps pondered over their words for a while.

"You're right, my noble children. I think I should heed your advice," she said thoughtfully. "I should escape, not merely to save myself from any possible humiliation, but because that will give me an opportunity to mobilise support for our struggle elsewhere."

"The situation would have been different if only Nana Sahib or Tatya Tope could have come to our rescue on time. Now, all we can do is fight to the last man and hold high the banner

of Jhansi!" said the nobles.

Arrangements were made as promptly as possible for the Rani's departure. It was a dark night. The Rani's spies went out and made sure that no soldier of the Company was anywhere nearby.

Accompanied by two of her trusted maids and some bodyguards, her little son Prince Damodar tied to her back, the Rani left her old familiar fort for no fault of hers, but for the greed and tyranny of a foreign trading company keen to build an empire!

As planned, the English surrounded the fort in the morning and resumed their assault. The inmates of the fort, ready to die, surprised the English by their determined resistance.

One of them, a young boy in his



teens, jumped from the terrace straight onto the shoulders of a captain. The captain fell down and the boy raised his dagger. A soldier shot the boy dead, but not before his dagger had struck the captain.

At last some enemy soldiers scaled the wall and opened the gates from inside. The English soldiers poured in.

Pierced with bullets, a woman continued to surge forward and reached her would-be killer and spat on his face before falling dead.

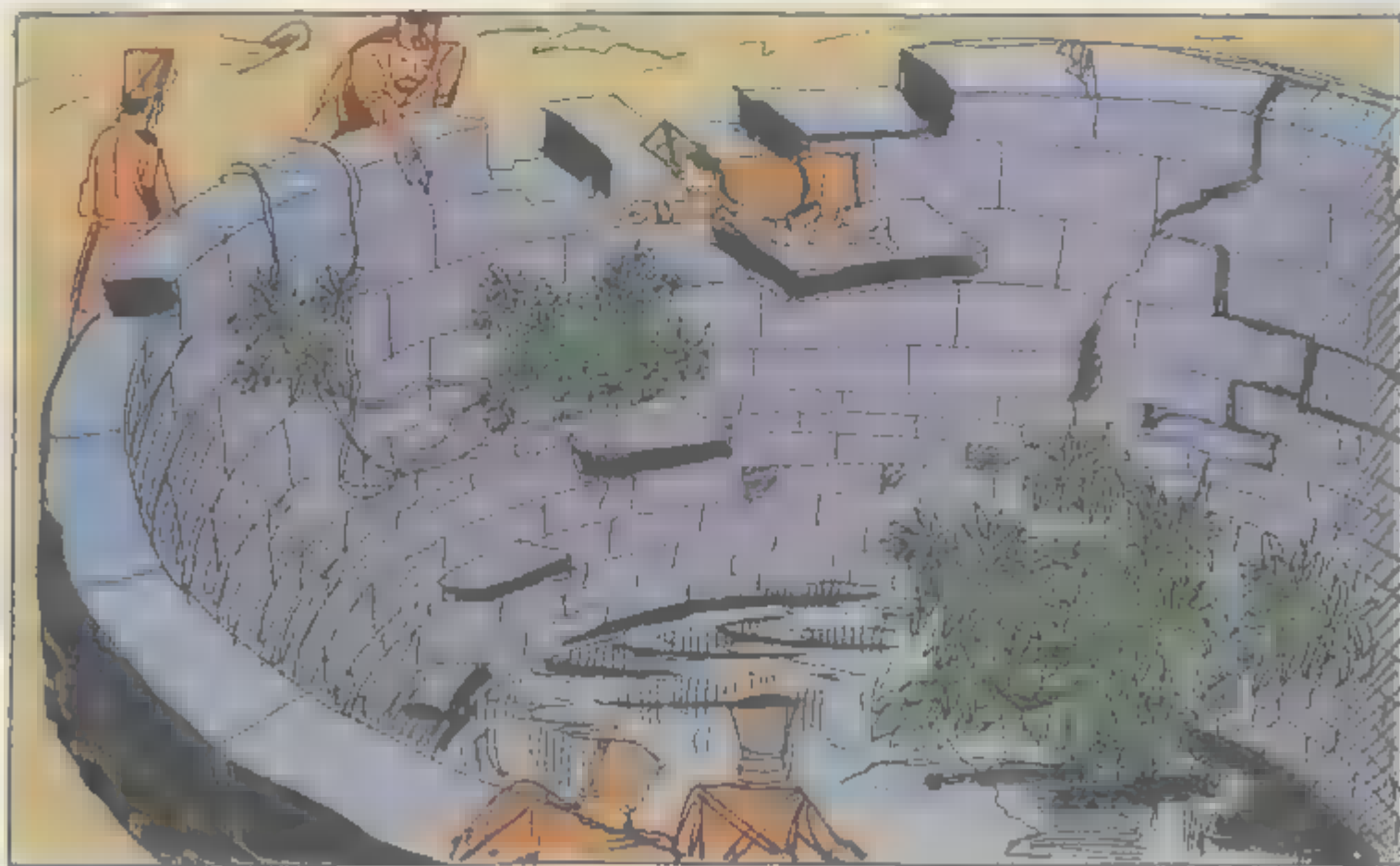
An old man in his eighties, when a British soldier pointed his gun at him, with remarkable alacrity rushed forward and throttled the gunman before falling dead himself.

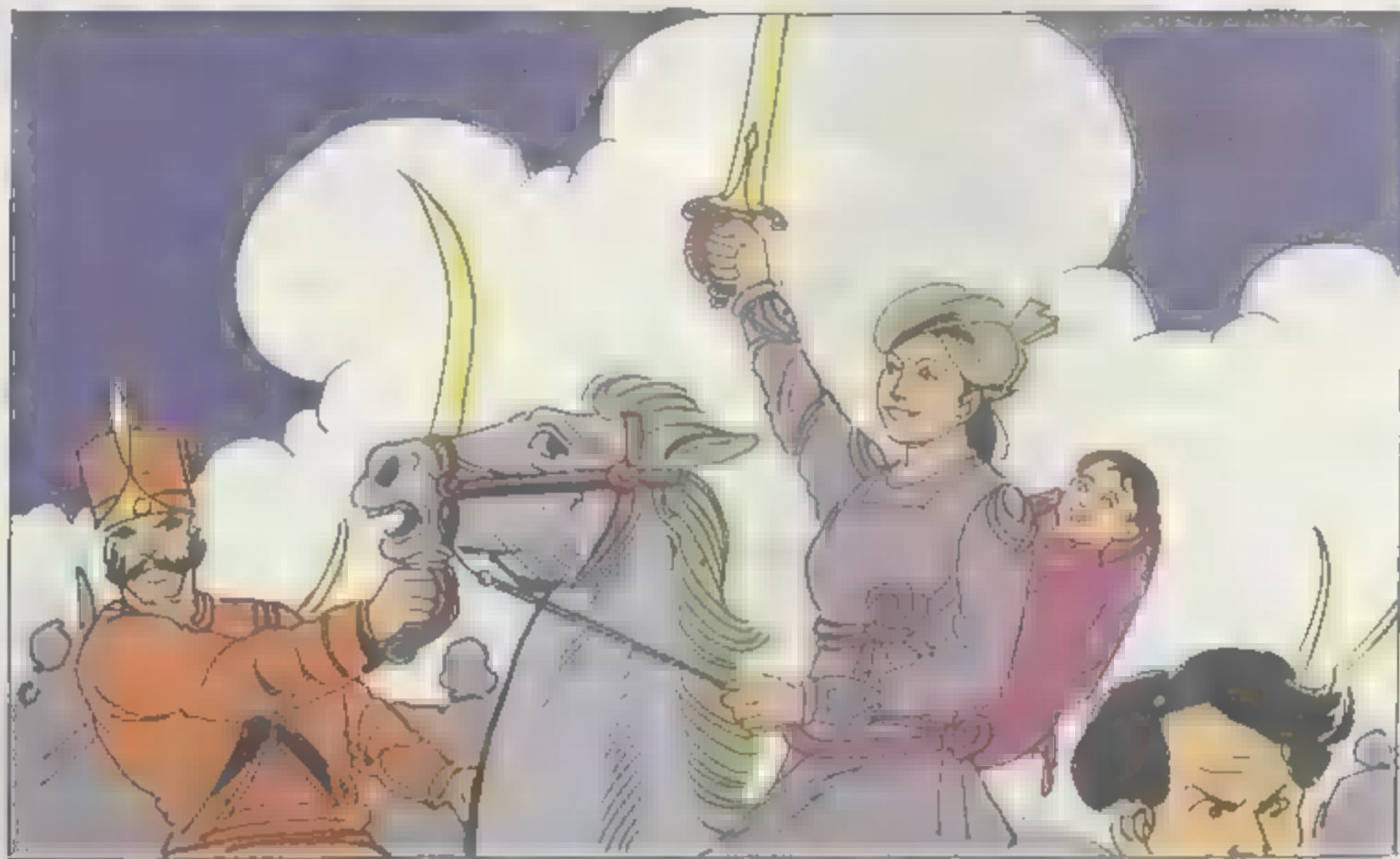
Everyone of the few hundred men and women who were inside the fort and in other buildings of the fort fought

relentlessly and some of them fought without even as much as a stick. Needless to say, all of them died. To the threat given out by the Company officers, "Disclose where the Rani is hiding," the response was, "She is busy supervising the digging of the graves for you fellows!"

The invaders killed everybody, but they had no joy, for they could not catch the Rani. They searched every nook and corner of the fort; they upturned or broke open every box. One of them even descended into a well to find out if the Rani was hiding there, but only to be bitten by a snake and to die!

In their fury, the invaders began killing the citizens of Jhansi. Not even the aged and the infants were spared. After plundering the houses, they set





fire to them. The whole city went up in flames.

The Rani was on her way to Kalpi. One of the captains of the English army, Bowker, who was camping with his troops in a deserted building outside Jhansi, wondered who it could be galloping away so fast. He suspected that it could be the Rani. Had not Sir Huge Rose promised a big reward for anyone who could capture the Rani alive? Bowker found it hard to check his temptation to pursue the escaping party.

He passed urgent orders to his soldiers to follow him and himself

jumped onto a horse and rode forward at great speed.

"Halt!" he shouted upon coming closer to the Rani's horse.

The Rani turned her horse at the speed of a streak of lightning and rushed upon Bowker. Holding the reins of her horse in her left hand and with the child still clinging to her back, she flashed her sword and struck down Bowker, who cried out in horror as he fell from his horse. The Rani then resumed her onward journey. Bowker's soldiers stopped, to take care of their bleeding captain.

-To continue

- A penny saved is a penny gained
- A wonder lasts but nine days
- Better be born lucky than rich
- A work ill done must be done twice

In Tipu's Domain

Text : Jayanthi Mahalingam

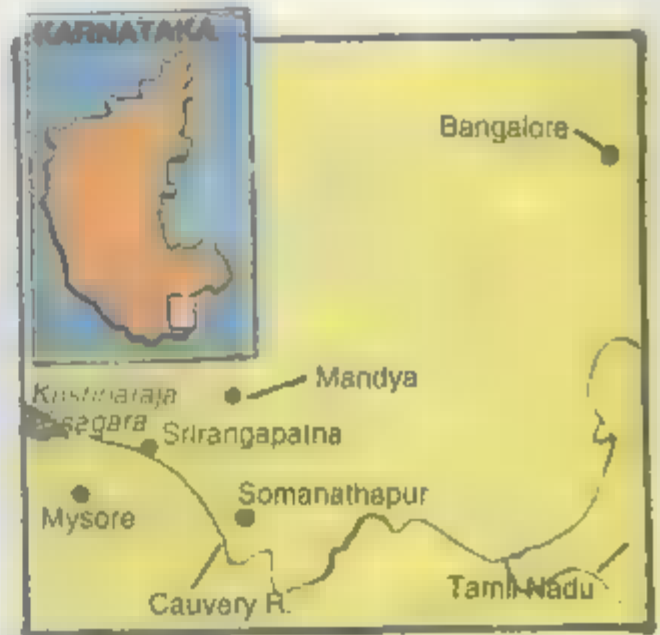
Illustrations : Goutam Sen

The Kaveri flows south-east for about 37 km from Krishnarajasagara till it bifurcates and forms the first of the three major islands on its course - Srirangapatna - which is 5 km long and 2 km wide. On each of the three islands there is a large shrine to Sri Ranganatha. Since the temple in Srirangapatna is the first, it is known as *Adiranga*.

The island was of strategic importance in medieval times right up to the 18th century, when Haider Ali and later his son, Tipu Sultan gained possession of it.

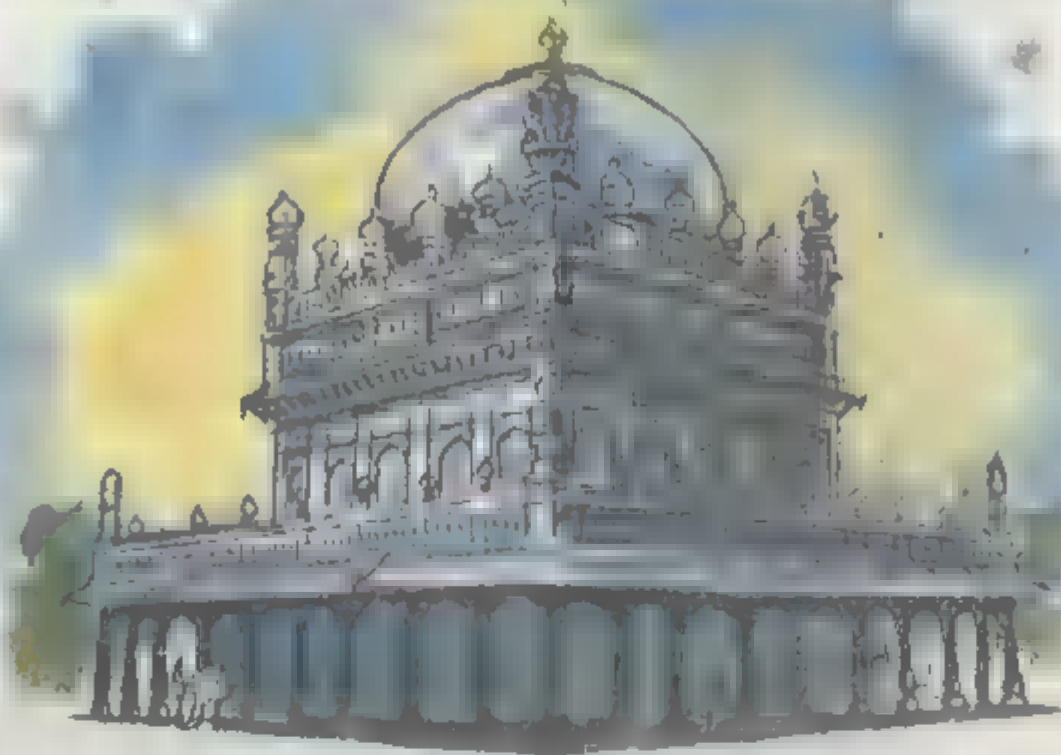
The structure that dominates Srirangapatna is the fort, built in 1454 during the Vijayanagara regime. It spreads over 5 sq km and is a city within itself, with a present population of more than 20,000. The 4,500 metre-long fort has four gates - the Bangalore, Mysore, Delhi and Water gates. With its three defence walls and three moats, the near-impregnable fort, even in its present state of dilapidation, is an impressive sight. The fort encloses the Ranganatha temple, the mosque built by Tipu, his Lal Mahal palace (now in ruins) and the dungeons where he incarcerated prisoners of war.

Sher-e-Mysore Tipu Sultan was a remarkable personality who valued independence above all else. Some historians, notably British ones, have condemned Tipu as a bigot and a tyrant. But this view seems to be an exaggerated one. When



Inset: Tipu Sultan
Srirangapatna Fort





The Gumbaz

the Shankaracharya of Sringeri appealed to him for help, Tipu intervened and got his assets restored. Both Haider and Tipu made generous grants to Hindu places of worship. The Ranganatha temple has a number of silver vessels donated by them and the duo is believed to have made obeisance to the deity before riding out to battle.

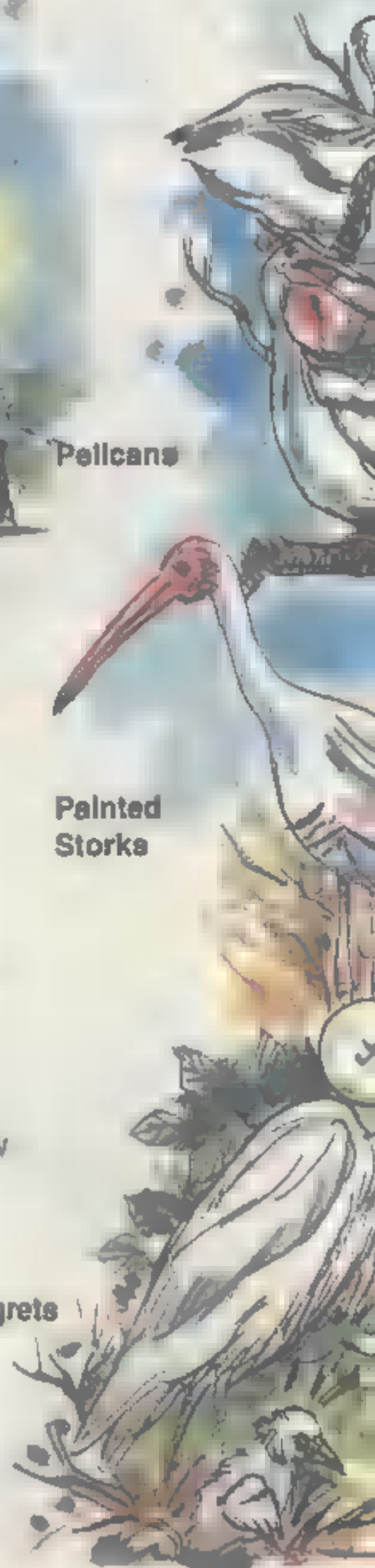
The Srirangapatna fort saw the last major siege during the fourth and final Anglo-Mysore war fought in 1799. ■ this time, Tipu could not weather the British attack. His final struggle took place near the old palace by the Water gate which faced the Kaveri. Wounded and exhausted, Tipu collapsed and crawled in ■ half-conscious state towards ■ narrow passage between the outer and inner walls, which led into the fort. But ■ was blocked by one of his traitorous officers named Mir Sadiq and the bullets aimed at Tipu's head found their mark. The spot where the brave sultan fell is marked by ■ marble plaque.

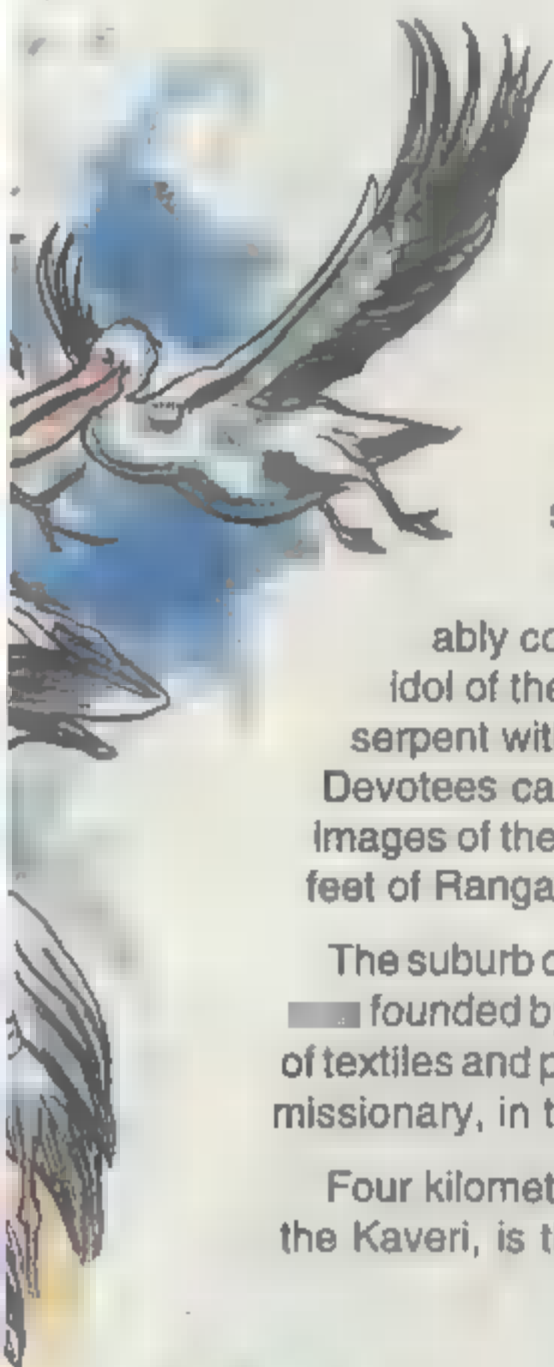
The three notable monuments in Srirangapatna erected by Tipu Sultan, are the Masjid, the Darya Daulat Bagh and the Gumbaz. The mosque, built in 1787, has a 250-step winding staircase leading up to the two sky-scraping minarets. From here, one can have a bird's eye-

Pelicans

Painted Storks

Egrets





view of the entire island. Dariya Daulat Bagh, literally 'the garden of the wealth of the sea', is located outside the fort and served Tipu's summer palace. The walls are decorated profusely with murals portraying Tipu's battles. There is now a museum housed here. The Gumbaz, situated at the south-eastern end of the town, is the mausoleum containing the tombs of Tipu and his parents. With its jet-black basalt pillars and inlaid ivory doors, it is a graceful building screened by cypress trees.

The Ranganathaswamy temple inside the fort was probably constructed in stages over a long period of time. The main idol of the reclining Ranganatha is a colossal 4.5 m in length. The serpent with its seven broad hoods looms protectively over the idol. Devotees can obtain *darshan* only from outside the sanctum. Small images of the sage Gautama and the goddess Kaveri are placed at the feet of Ranganatha.

The suburb of Ganjam, on the eastern end of the island outside the fort, was founded by Tipu. It was once famous for its figs and the manufacture of textiles and paper. The Catholic church built by Abbe Dubois, a French missionary, in the 18th century, is its only monument of note.

Four kilometres away from Srirangapatna, on another small island in the Kaveri, is the well-known Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary. The skies

Ranganathaswamy Temple



above Ranganathittu are one great sheet of vivid colour between June and December when the birds arrive for breeding. The island was declared a sanctuary in 1940 and attracts a wide variety of avian visitors, including herons, spoonbills, ibises, kingfishers and open-bill storks. Tourists can view the birds from a raised *machan* in the centre of the island.

Following the course of the Kaveri as it turns south from Srirangapatna, almost 25 km away, is the small village of Somanathapura on the left bank of the river. The temple here is an outstanding example of Hoysala architecture, and is better-preserved than the temples in Halebidu and Belur. Built by Somanatha Dandanayaka, a minister under the Hoysala king, Narasimha III in 1258, the Keshava temple is constructed in the unique star-shaped plan followed by all Hoysala temples. The outer wall has a series of sculptures depicting parts of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, while in the *garbhagriha* are carved images of various deities, 194 in all. The central shrine is empty. The image of Keshava that was once there is now missing.

Though the actual builders and sculptors of most great Indian temples remain anonymous, at Somanathapura, the wall-panels on the exterior of the temple carry the 'autographs' of the sculptors! A delicately wrought slab also acquaints posterity with the names of those who made grants to the temple. Soma is credited with constructing four other temples here, but the Panchalingeswara and Lakshminarasimha temples are the only two structures besides the Keshava temple, to survive the ravages of time. They are now in a state of ruin. And if something is not done soon by the government to restore and preserve it, the lovely Keshava temple too, may meet the same fate.

Somanathapura Temple



THE 'MISER' AND THE COBBLER



Long, long ago in a small realm there lived a very wealthy merchant. Day by day, the richer he grew, more and more miserly did he seem to the eyes of the people. All those who went to him for help, even the poorest pauper, had to go back disappointed, without even a farthing in their hands. Finally, at the entrance to his mansion, a board was very prominently displayed, spelling out the following words in big bold letters : **SORRY, NO CHARITY HERE!**

"If we are not going to get any help here, from the richest man in the town, then where will we get it from?" wondered one of the townsfolk.

"He is all alone, with no descendants! What will happen to all his wealth after he is dead and gone?"

pondered another.

"Why, I think, he will hitch his possessions, mansion and all to himself and carry them along to his next life," added a third, sarcastically.

But it mattered little to the rich merchant what people said about him. He was happy and he stuck to his policy and remained as miserly and stingy as ever in the eyes of his fellowmen.

It so happened that in the same town there lived a poor shoemaker. He was known to be a great benefactor. With open hands he gave alms to all those who turned to him for help. But surprisingly, he led a very simple and ordinary life himself.

One day, the rich merchant suddenly died leaving behind all his wealth and possessions. People did



not pay much heed to him nor did they pay their last respects. Indeed, he was the richest man of the realm, but he was a miser to the last degree! His house was sealed for the king's court to take charge of it, for he had no heir to his property.

Time passed. Days grew into weeks and weeks into a month. The benevolent shoemaker, all this while, continued to give alms to the poor and the needy.

But one day, when some mendicants came to him as usual, he turned them away, saying, "I am sorry, I have nothing more to give you!"

In fact, from that day onwards whosoever came to him for help went back disappointed. People sat won-

dering what had suddenly gone wrong. For years together the good shoemaker had never failed to help them. So was it not surprising that he should now just turn them away, very courteously though?

"What happened, Master Cobbler? Something seems to have gone wrong with you!" asked his friends.

But the shoemaker remained mum and spoke not a word.

The news about the cobbler's sudden change of nature reached the inquisitive ears of the king. He was at once curious and he thought it was in fact his duty to know what actually had gone wrong with him. He summoned the simple man.

"How on earth can it be possible that a generous and large-hearted man like you has all of a sudden stopped helping the poor and the needy? We were indeed proud of you and your name had spread far and wide!" said the king when the shoemaker was ushered in to his presence.

"What can I do, Your Majesty, when the very source of this great benevolence no longer exists!" answered the man, bowing low.

"What do you mean? Will you explain?" demanded the king, rather bewildered.

"O King! Many many years ago," continued the cobbler in a slow and measured tone, "the wealthy merchant who passed away a month ago, came to me with a big sum of money to be

given away in charity."

"You mean, the man branded in the kingdom ■ the most miserly and stingy?" enquired the minister.

"Yes, Your Lordship, he was the very man who was the source of my so-called philanthropy!" replied the cobbler in a voice choked with emotion. "Well, he made me promise that I would not disclose to anyone where the money came from."

"Then what happened? Fear not, tell us all!" said the king in a gentle tone.

"So I gave the rich merchant my word of honour that I would not reveal his secret. Now, with his death, I have not ■ farthing to give, because I myself am a poor man!" replied the simple shoemaker with tearful eyes. "I would not have revealed his secret had you, my king, not asked me."

"Oh! That is indeed a sad and sweet tale!" sighed the king.

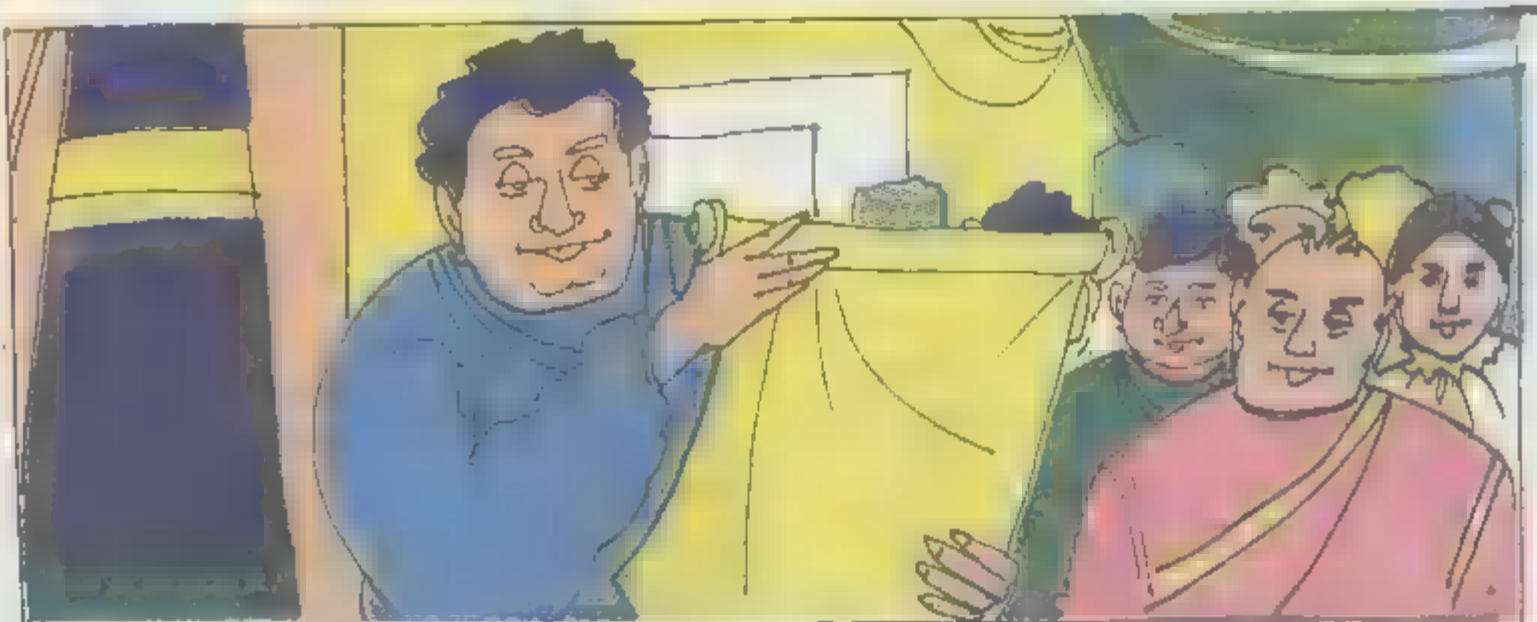
The story of the rich merchant spread all over the realm. Soon a bee-line of people wended its way to the

grave of the departed merchant. The king himself led the procession. They all paid their due respects with flowers and tears and begged forgiveness for the wrong and humiliation that they might have caused him while he was living.

Not long after, the will of the rich man was discovered in his house. It read: "My dear fellowmen, I leave behind all my wealth and possessions for the welfare and well-being of my land and people. If ever you feel bad that you have misunderstood and ill-treated me, please do not grieve, for you have done so unwittingly and you are forgiven."

But the king and his people still wondered that in this age of strife and hatred there still lived men like the good merchant, so selfless, so understanding, so humble, and so modest! They were happy when they felt assured that surely the future held hope and promise.

—Retold by Anup ■■■■ ■■■■



KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK



The Kaziranga National Park is also known as the home of the famous one-horned Indian rhino. The sanctuary is situated in the remote north eastern corner of India, in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam, and spreads over 430 sq. km. of flat land along the Karbi Ang Long foothills. In 1926, the Park was formally opened with a view to offering protection to the threatened Indian rhino—a species once found along the North Indian belt. However, in 1908 it was a sanctuary for just 12 survivors. Today, it is a home to approximately 1,600 rhinos.

A full grown Indian rhino weighs about 1,800 kg and is 5.5 ft in height. However, the largest of the species is the African rhino, while the smallest are the ones from Sumatra, weighing a little less than 1,000 kg and growing to a height of just 4.5 ft. The rarest of the species is the Javan rhino.

Most of the sanctuary at Kaziranga is marshland, but it also has fens and orchards. This scenic park, apart from being a storehouse of rare species, also provides one of the grandest hiking spots in India.

PURURAVAS

~ The king who married the most beautiful nymph ~

King Pururavas belonged to an early age when those among men who were pious and powerful at the same time could visit the heavens. King Pururavas was a frequent visitor to the court of Indra.

Once, on his way to the heavens, Pururavas heard a cry and saw a demon named Kesi forcibly carrying away two nymphs, Urvasi and Chitrlekha, belonging to Indra's Court. Pururavas fought with the demon and defeated him. He then led the nymphs back to their heavenly abode.

Once it so happened that Urvasi was cursed by a sage, as a result of which she was required to live on the earth, among the mortals, for a period of time. The only one she knew and respected on earth was Pururavas. She also knew well that Pururavas had great affection for her. No wonder that after descending on earth, she went straight to meet the king. Pururavas felt honoured. He proposed marriage; Urvasi had no objection. But, for a marriage between a mortal and a nymph to be possible, certain conditions had to be observed. One condition was, Urvasi had a pair of charming lambs with her. The king must look after them properly.

Pururavas and Urvasi lived as husband and wife for many years. But Indra and all the members of his court missed her. They wished to bring her back to heavens, for the period of curse on Urvasi, too, had come to an end. They asked the Gundharvas to search for her. She was

at last located in the palace of Pururavas. One stormy night, the Gundharvas tried to steal the lambs and almost succeeded. That meant, the king had not arranged for their proper protection. Unwittingly, the king had also violated another condition. Hence Urvasi departed at once.

The king, now separated from Urvasi, wandered like mad. The Gods and Gundharvas grew kind towards him. It was so arranged that once every year the king and the nymph would meet at Kurukshetra.

The story is highly symbolic, and so many poems and plays have been written on the legend of Pururavas and Urvasi.



COSSACKS

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Hundreds of years ago, Russia was full of different tribes and races of people who had made their way from the great plains, or steppes and the mountain ranges of Asia. One of these races—the Cossacks—settled along the banks of the river Don which flows into the **■** of Anoz, near the Black Sea. At the same time, they bred a special kind of horse which **■** noted for its great

strength and stamina. The Cossacks became splendid horsemen. Their reputation as riders and warriors grew over the years and they came to be looked upon **■** some of the finest cavalry in the world. Today the Cossacks are as famous as ever. They give exciting riding displays. They have also formed a choir which gives concerts all over the world.

RAINBOW

- Shital

THE TREE OF LIFE

The scientific name for the Margosa leaf is 'melia azadirachta' and it is commonly used in almost every custom and ritual in South India. The special properties possessed by the Margosa leaf are believed to scare away evil spirits. This is, however, not completely devoid of **■** scientific explanation as the strong and pungent smell of the Margosa leaves work as an effective repellent to insects and flies which are carriers of several diseases. Almost every part of the Margosa tree is used for its medicinal properties. A decoction made from its bark is often used by physicians to cure fever. Its tender leaves when consumed are said to prevent certain diseases from attacking newborn babies and to protect the mother from catching **■** infection.



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A vertical illustration on the left side of the page depicts King Vikram, a man with a mustache wearing a red tunic and a crown, carrying a pale, lifeless body on his shoulder. He is walking through a dark, stormy landscape with rain falling around him. In the background, there are silhouettes of trees and several white skulls floating in the air. The overall mood is dark and ominous.

New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire

Honour for dunce

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces.

But King Vikram did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke: "O King, normally you should be enjoying a good sleep at this hour of the night. Instead of doing that, what makes you go through this strange ritual? Have you got yourself involved in a difficult situation? Sometimes even the cleverest of the clever will not find an easy way to get out of such situations—especially when they are the creations of idiots and dunces. We've a good example in Mandabal. O King! Listen to his story. Probably you will become wiser after that!" The vampire then began his narration.



Long ago, there was a king called Hemchandra. He was a lover of the fine arts, literature especially. His court abounded in luminaries in every field of art. Some of them had been given the status of laureates. He would not want to miss their company, so whenever he travelled outside the kingdom, he took them along with him and enjoyed conversing with them, and listening to their dialogues and arguments among themselves.

The king once happened to hear about the scenic beauty of a place called Himasagar and wished to visit that place and spend some days there. As usual, he made arrangements for the laureates to accompany him. They stayed in a huge *pandal*, while he had

a tent put up for himself. The local people looked after their comforts.

Among them was Mandabal. He was an idiot but he always posed as if he was an intellectual and would often engage himself in conversation with even wise and intelligent people among the residents. As they did not want to waste their time, they would agree with his arguments and call him a know-all and send him away happy and contented. As a result, he came to believe that he was the wisest in Himasagar.

Mandabal had a sister, Mukta. She was not only a beauty, but very intelligent. All the young men in the place and elsewhere, too, wished to marry her and they tried to win her affection and attention by flattering her brother. They praised him sky high, calling him a *pundit* and a jewel among intellectuals. Small wonder, then, that Mandabal became conceited and arrogant.

When he heard that the king and his entourage were camping near the lake, he proceeded there and addressed the men of arts and literature: "I'm a great pundit, and you can verify that fact from any wise man of this place. They will agree that I'm the wisest of them all. I would, therefore, suggest that you hold a ceremony to honour me."

They believed his word and began to talk to him with respect and some expectation that they would be able to



listen to some words of wisdom. However, it did not take them much time to realise how hollow his claim to wisdom was. He was unable to answer any of the questions they put to him. "We doubt whether you had ever turned the leaves of any holy books," they remarked. "You haven't been able to answer any of our questions. How then can you claim any wisdom or intelligence? How could the people here call you a pundit? If they do, then they must be only doing so for a hearty laugh among themselves. You are nothing more than a dunce!"

Mandabal was angry when he heard all those remarks by the laureates accompanying King Hemichandra. "I did not ask you to test my knowledge," he protested. "I had only requested you to felicitate me. You could not understand even a simple thing like that! I'm left to wonder how the king was persuaded to reward you with royal status and give you awards!"

The laureates did not let him off easily. "We're not going to answer that question," they said, "because it concerns the king and his prerogative. Why don't you go and ask the king himself? He's there, in that tent!"

Mandabal, unhesitatingly, proceeded to the king's tent. On being ushered into the royal presence, he was struck by the king's handsome looks. "O King! How handsome you



are!" he exclaimed, flatteringly. "But I'm surprised what kind of dunces you have appointed as laureates! What qualities or excellence did you see in them?"

Hemchandra did not need any other evidence to assess the intelligence of his visitor. "All right, what did you find lacking in them?"

"They refused to recognise me as a pundit," said Mandabal. "They don't know how to show respect to an intellectual, like me. Please call them and give them proper instructions – that they should honour me and that if they fail to do so, you would send them out of your *darbar*!"

"Suppose I refuse to give them any such instructions, then, what

would *you* do to me?" queried the king, smilingly.

Mandabal was dumbstruck for some time. "Are you stumped for an answer?" Hemchandra taunted him. "You claim to be a pundit, yet you don't have an answer to my simple question! Tell me, what action will *you* take, if I don't agree to heed your request?" repeated the king.

It was not for the first time that Mandabal was being confronted with such a question. His stock answer was that he would not give his sister, Mukta, in marriage to them! He told the king: "Well, I won't tell you what I would do, but I shall tell you what I would *not* do. I don't care even if it happens to be a king."

"Don't speak in riddles, young man!" said the king sternly. "Make

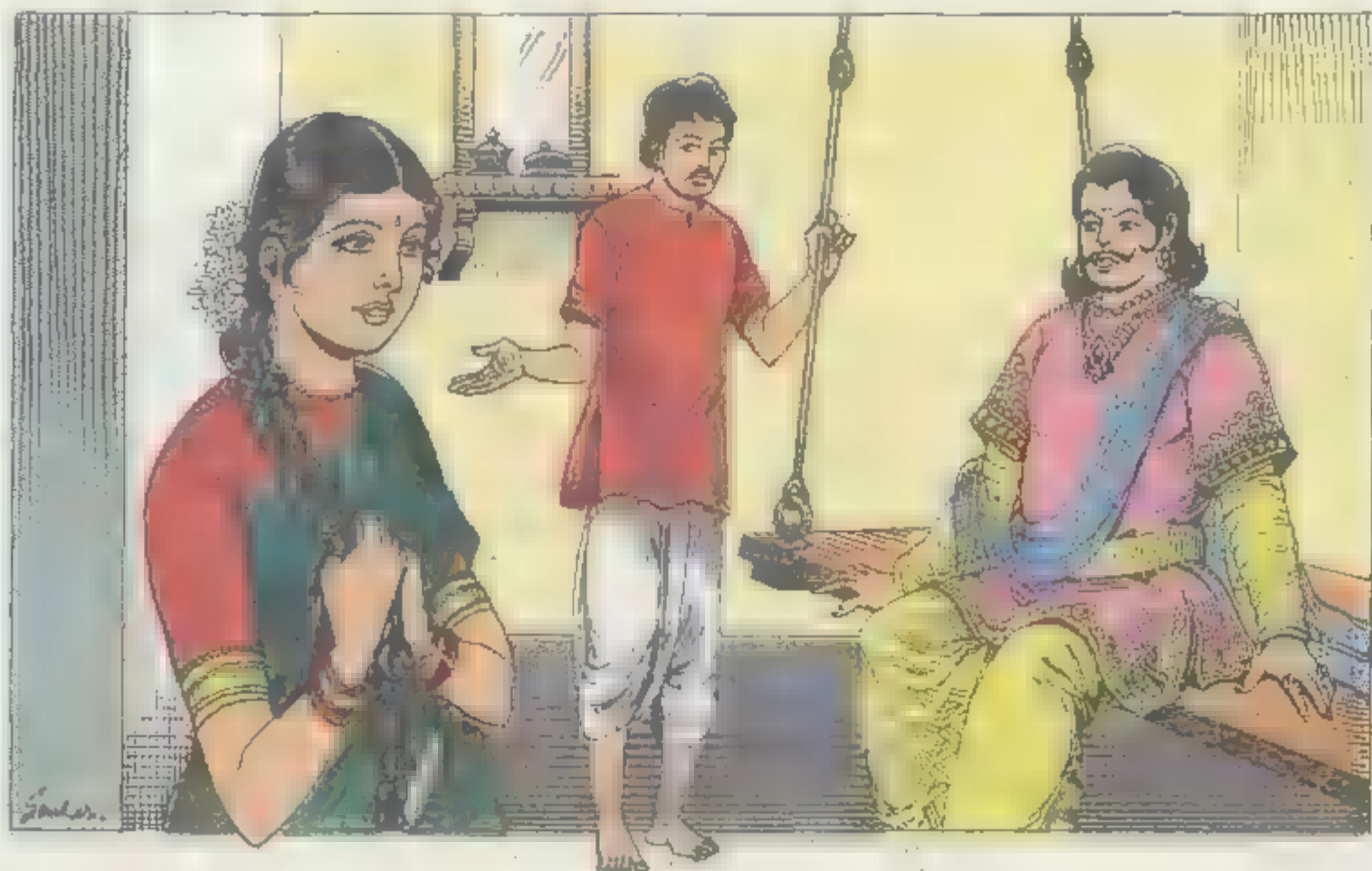
yourself clear."

"Oh! I won't give my sister in marriage to you! That's all!" said Mandabal in one breath.

The king could not control his laughter. However, he was curious to find out what kind of sister such a stupid fellow would have. He thought he ahwould talk to her.

"I shall decide about honouring you after I meet your sister once," said Hemchandra. "Take me to your house."

Mandabal escorted the king to his house. When he saw Mukta, the king was captivated by her beauty. And when he started talking to her, he did not take much time to find out how intelligent she was. "I find that you're not only beautiful but very intelligent, too. You deserve to become a



queen. I wish to marry you. Would you accept my hand?"

Before Mukta could give him an answer, Mandabal said: "O King! Only if your Pundits and Vidwans recognised me and honoured me will this marriage take place. I've already told you that, and you too had agreed to that condition."

Hemchandra did not like the way Mandabal intervened in the matter of his proposal. "We've taken a decision as we like each other. Who are you to interfere in this matter?" he said curtly. "If your intention is to derive some money out of this, I can give you as much money as you want! You can have it and then keep quiet!"

Now, it was the turn of Mukta to intervene, and she took sides with her brother. "O King! He's my brother.

What he has demanded is something very simple. And you can easily fulfil his desire. Can't your majesty accept his simple demand, so that our wedding can take place?"

The king told the two that he would think over Mandabal's request and went back to his tent. He then sent for the laureates who had accompanied him to Himasagar and told them of what had happened between him and the brother and sister. "If my marriage with Mukta should take place, I would need your cooperation. It can happen only if we fulfil the desire of Mandabal. He insists that he would agree to Mukta marrying me only if he is recognised by you people. After all, *she* is not a dunce like her brother. She is both beautiful and intelligent. She asks me whether I can't get this





small desire fulfilled. Now it's all in your hands!"

The laureates discussed the issue amongst themselves and went back to the king. "Your majesty! It will not be proper for us to honour a dunce like him. It will not only reflect on us, but bring shame to your majesty. We've, therefore, thought of an alternative. We shall give up the titles conferred on us, and we request your permission to do so. We shall not remain laureates any more."

Hemchandra was upset when he heard their decision. "Let me think about this," he said and signalled to them to go back to their tent. The king was in a real dilemma. He was unable to forget Mukta, and at the same time,

he did not wish to lose the company of the laureates.

When no word came from the king though he continued his sojourn in Himasagar, Mukta could guess what would have happened. She managed to send an invitation to the laureates to visit her home. She received them with great respect and said: "You're all learned men, but why is it that your wisdom and intelligence cannot go to the help of the king?"

"You've got it wrong, lady," they replied, "we've always gone to the help of our king and he's grateful to us for our advice and suggestions. We're now trying to save him from marrying a dunce's sister."

Mukta posed as if she did not understand them fully. "Please tell me all about it."

"That man whom we call a dunce," they explained, "wants us, pundits, to recognise his wit and wisdom and honour him. Only then would he agree to his sister marrying our king. How can we do that, knowing well that he's only a dunce? He's no other than Mandabal."

"He's my brother, gentlemen," said Mukta. "I can prove that he's someone who deserves to be respected."

"He may be your brother," responded the laureates, "but he lacks in knowledge of any subject. Then, how can we respect him?"

"A person need not be an erudite scholar to deserve respect," insisted

Mukta, "and I speak from my experience."

She then went inside and brought some of the gifts that she had received from her suitors. She opened one box and showed them a neem sapling. "This came from Chandan Nagar. You know sandalwood trees are very common there. The people, therefore, treat the neem as rare, and that's how I got such a precious gift from that place." She then picked up a copper ring from a trinket box. "This came to me from Sonapur, which as you know abounds in gold mines. Copper is something people there do not come across very easily and is rare there. So my suitor from that place sent me a copper ring! Ah! I must show you a black marble piece which came from a place where white marble is so abundant." She showed them the shining black marble. Then there were artefacts in ivory, silks, woollen shawls, and carpets. "Now you can imagine what my brother's character is. He was not carried away by any of these priceless gifts. It must now be very clear to you, gentlemen, what he values most in life – a recognition by the people."

The pundits now looked at each other, wondering whether their assessment of the brother and sister was correct. An elderly person among them said: "Young woman, you've removed our conceit from us. Nobody has till now told us that even dunces



have their character and will deserve respect by others. Your brother may be a dunce, but as *you* will be a model Maharani, he should be honoured for standing by you and taking you along the correct path."

The vampire concluded his narration and turned to Vikramaditya. "O King! What do you make out of the intellectuals who decided to honour a dunce? At first, they had despised him and did not want to recognise him as an equal. In fact, they had even put him to test, and he was unable to answer even one question. It's such a dunce that they later decided to honour! What prompted them to reverse their opinion? If you know the answer but fail to satisfy me, let me



warn you that your head will be blown into a thousand pieces!"

The king was not perturbed by such threats, because he had ready answers to the vampire's questions: "Some items may be rare and unique in certain places, whereas they will be very common and cheap in other places – like the neem sapling or the copper ring or the black marble that Mukta received as gifts from her suitors. They were priceless for those men, and that's how they chose them as their gifts in the hope that Mukta would accept their proposal. Similarly, a person may appear to be a

dunce to some people, while others may find some good traits in the man's character. This was proved by Mukta. When the pundits realised the truth in her argument, they changed their attitude towards Mandabal and decided to recognise his merits and honour him for the sake of their kingdom which stood to gain in the form of a clever woman as their queen."

The vampire knew that the king had outsmarted him, once again. He flew back to the ancient tree carrying the corpse with him. Vikramaditya drew his sword and went after the vampire.

- Children should be seen and not heard
- Dexterity comes by experience
- Happy is the bride the sun shines on
- Hunger is the best sauce
- No fool like an old fool
- No is wise at all times

News Flash

A different movie fan

We usually describe a person a movie fan if he or she regularly goes to the theatre and watches movies, particularly the new releases. The 12-year-old Italian girl Gloria is not such a fan of films. She is a fan of just one movie — *Titanic*. You may remember that this film won as many as 11 "Oscars" this year. Gloria has, between January and March, seen this popular film more than ■ hundred times, going to the same theatre, sitting in the same seat in the same row during the same show, and going there again the following night—however, with one exception: come weekend, she would watch the movie during two consecutive screenings! Highly impressed with her patronage of the theatre and the movie, the management keeps the particular seat reserved for her for the particular show —now free of charge.

"Twin" achievement

Israeli twins recently gave birth to boys within one hour of each other. The sisters had gone to the same kindergarten, attended the same school, and studied in the same teachers college. Later, they married brothers. And now the birth of the boys, who are reported to be looking indetical. Indeed, ■ very rare happening.

Baby or doll?

Anyone who saw Kanwal soon after she was born had wondered whether she was really a baby or a doll. Because she was as tiny as just 6 inches long

and could be held on an open palm. Her bed was the size of two cigarette packets put one above the other. That was 12 years ago. Now the girl, living in Rawalpindi in Pakistan, is only 20 inches tall. Strangely, her brother and sister have the growth of normal children. Kanwal is attracting a lot of visitors, who consider her ■ a divine being and wish to seek her blessings.



■ man of many records

Eight astronauts, including a Japanese woman for the first time, recently spent 15 days in space shuttle Columbia. And they had for company mice, rats, snails, and other insects numbering 2,000. But Parthasarathy of Coimbatore, not long ago, spent 41 days in a glass chamber in the company of 250 scorpions and snakes of different varieties, many of them poisonous like the Cobra and Viper. Of course, he earned ■ place in the Guinness Book of World Records. Alas, he is no more. He died a natural death in the first week of April. But many people do not know the other records of the 'snake man'. In 1978, he looked at this sun for 33 hours without closing his eyelids even for once. He also watched ■ solar eclipse without protecting his eyes. At another time he ate 1 kilo of green chillies, 1 kilo of ice cubes, and 1 kilo of salt in one go, in 15 minutes. He climbed the 1,000 steps of a temple on one leg, backwards too, in two days non-stop. He walked backwards a distance of 117km between Coimbatore and

Dodabetta in Ootacamund in 28 hours. By just blowing through his nose, he pushed a tiny seed for a distance of 1 km, crawling all the time. Asked what goaded him to attempt these records, he said: "I wanted to be different from others!"

A rarest occurrence

Science professor Ernie Carey shared his joy with his students and then dismissed the class. What happened in between was that he became a grandfather three times on the same day. Eldest daughter Karralee gave birth to her first child at 7.18 a.m. Second daughter Marrienne gave birth to her second child at 3.25 p.m. Prof. Carey was still in his class when Mrs. Carey telephoned to say that their third daughter Jennifer was already in hospital, where a second child was born to her later at 8.50 p.m. Prof. Carey threw up his hands and posed a question to his students: what is the possibility ratio of such an occurrence of three successive births on the same day? He himself provided the answer: one in 50,000,000! The March 11 births took place at different places in the U.S.A.

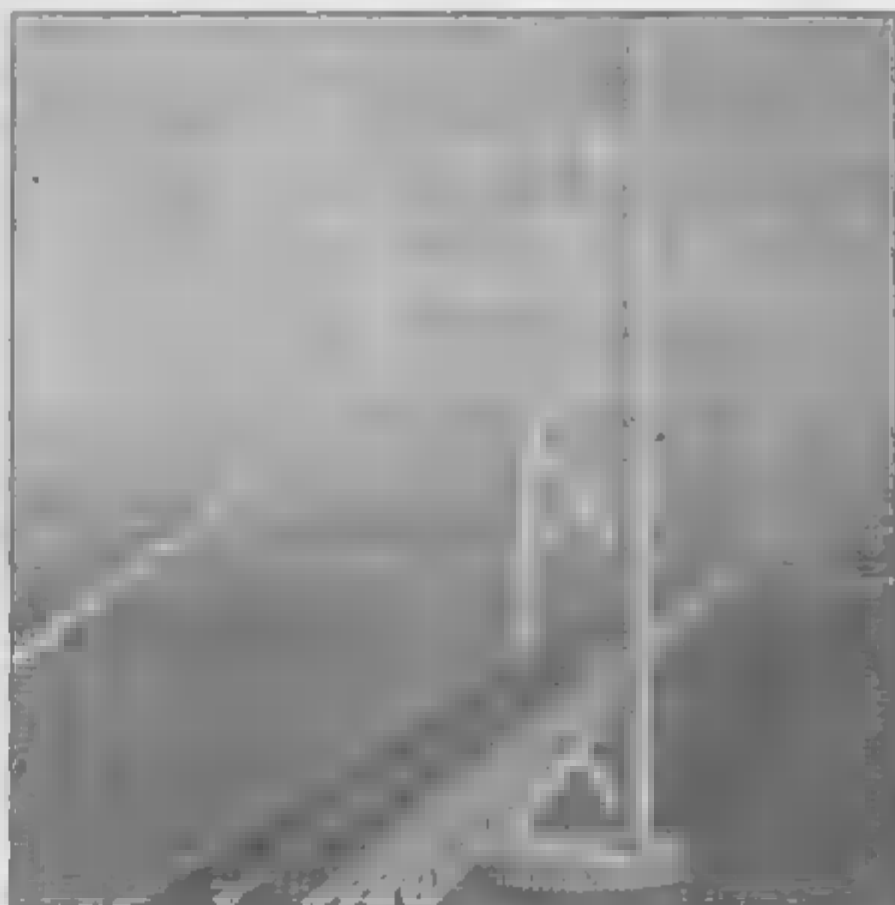
Father, son appear for same

Twenty-five years ago, P.P. Davis of Kanimangalam, near Trichur in Kerala, had to stop studies when he had just completed the 7th Standard. His father could not afford the "luxury" of education for his son. The

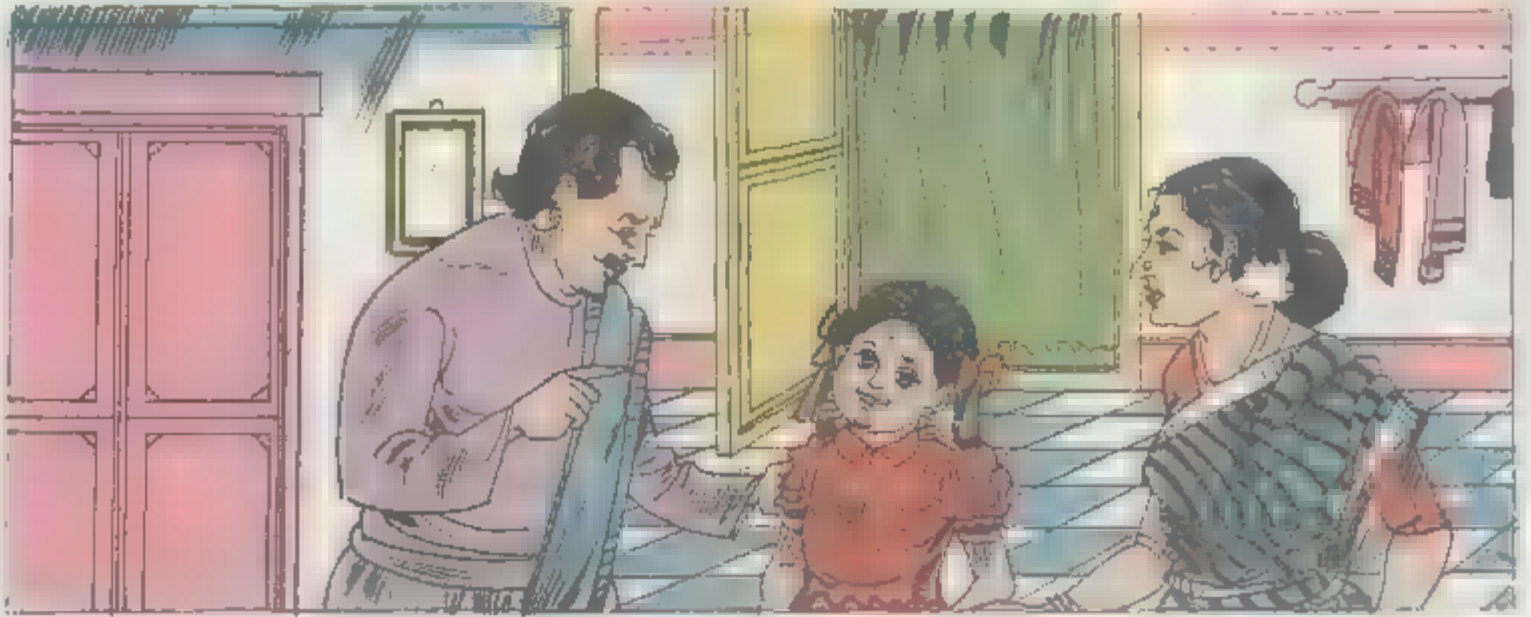
boy then joined a small printing press and learnt composing. Those days, one had to pick up each type from a case to compose a line or a sentence. A few years later, Davis opened a cycle shop, where he gave bicycles on hire or attended to minor repairs to vehicles taken to him. He then married and the couple had a son and daughter who, in course of time, went to school. Davis could not help nourishing a dream—studying up to S.S.L.C. He studied privately, and last March appeared for the examination along with his son Vipin. The two sat in different rooms in the same centre. Incidentally, Davis has been the President of the Parent-Teacher Association of the school where his son studied.

Suspension Bridge

The world's longest suspension bridge has been opened for traffic in Kobe, in Japan. It is a little more than 1,990 metres long.



A BLESSING IN DISGUISE



Charumati was the only daughter of Kamalnath and Meenakshi of Ganeshpuri. The girl seemed to have butter-fingers. Whatever she picked up would fall down and break into pieces. If she had a piece of cloth in her hands, sure as anything, it would have a tear somewhere. When she was hardly three years, she once was found clutching at her mother's costly silk sari. However much they all tried, she would not let go the sari. As they did not want to beat her, they cut the sari where the girl held it with a pair of scissors and later stitched on the piece left in her hand.

Meenakshi was in tears. It was one of her favourite saris. Kamalnath tried to pacify his wife. "After all, Charu did not tear it herself. We should have waited till she let go the sari. We were

impatient and so cut it with scissors."

Not long after that incident, a lovely chinese jar in their possession was found broken. It was Charumati's mischief, no doubt. This became a frequent affair, and invariably every month some article or another suffered damage at the hands of Charumati. When their friends came in, they found Kamal and Meenakshi glum and they argued. "This is only natural, especially if there are little children around. They are not doing it deliberately. It is just that they are careless. But you should not punish them or scold them. And there's no point in weeping over anything irredeemable."

However, some other friends would only be angry with the girl. "Is this a little girl? She looks innocent, but she

is really an incarnation of Kali! Can't she be a little careful when she picks up things? Charu needs some disciplining!"

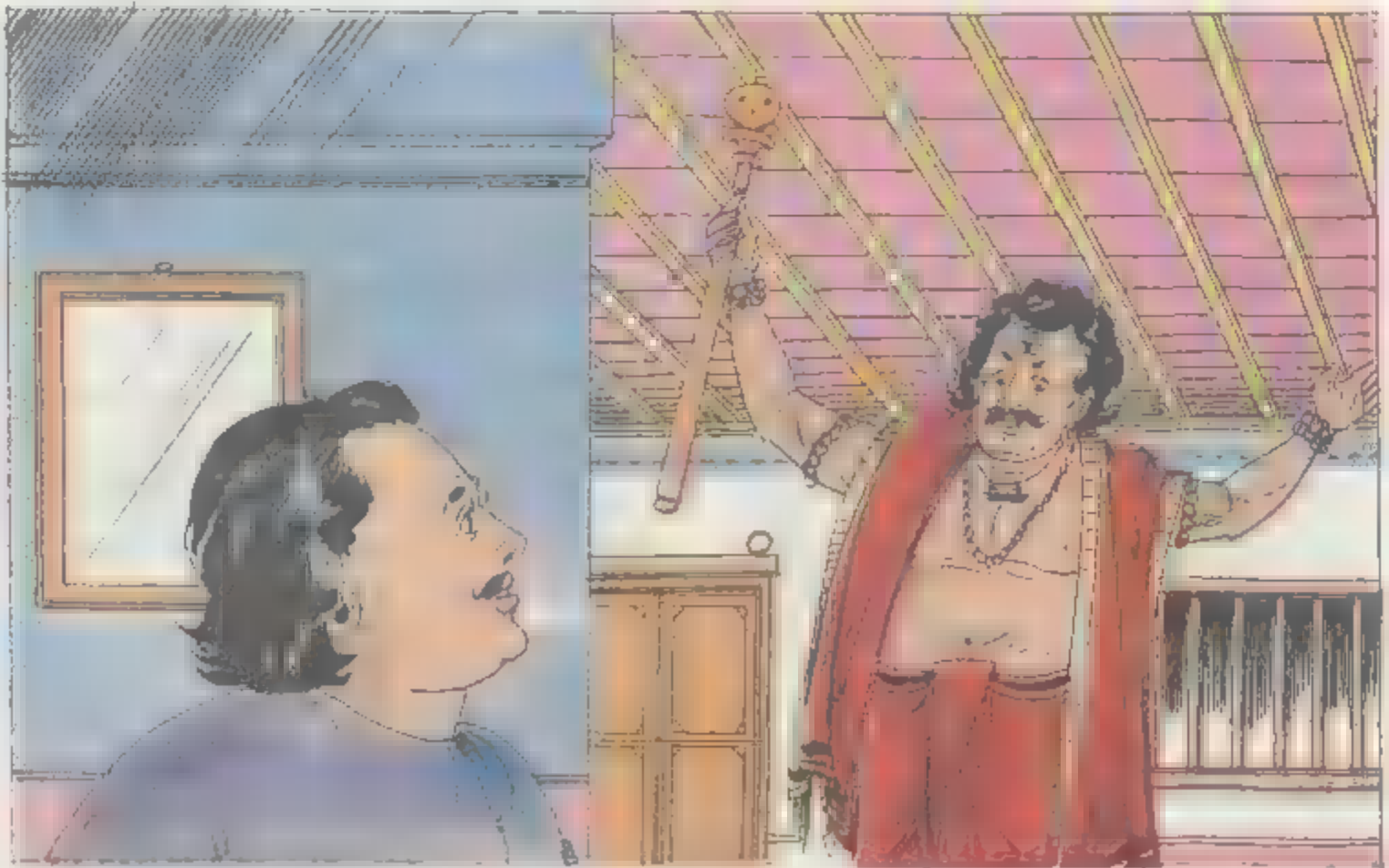
Now Kamalnath was a worried man. He wondered whether his daughter had come under the spell of some evil spirits. He decided to consult Mayan the sorcerer in the neighbouring town of Sonapur and get his help in exorcising the spirit out of Charumati.

In another town, Avantipur, there lived Bankura. He was a cheat. He had managed to learn some magic and wizardry and made use of his knowledge to cheat people of their valuables. He would prepare in clay a human figure and visit the shop of a jeweller. With his magic, he would hoodwink the shopkeeper and remove

precious stones from his tray and push them into the clay figure. Soon the clay would harden and the jeweller would be left wondering where the precious stones had disappeared. Bankura, of course, would have put out an innocent face! Later, he would break the figure and pull out the precious stones.

Kamalnath went to Sonapur and met Mayan. He described to him Charumati's mischiefs. The sorcerer was of the opinion that the little girl was under the influence of some evil spirit. He agreed to go with Kamalnath to Ganeshpuri and exorcise the spirit on to his magic wand.

On reaching Kamalnath's house, the girl was brought before Mayan who questioned her about her mischief and examined her hands, particularly



the fingers. "I think, I shall perform a 'homa' to exorcise the evil spirit," said Mayan. "For that I'll need a few items." He then prepared a list and asked Kamalnath to fetch them.

Without anyone noticing it, Charumati picked up the magic wand in Mayan's bag and broke it into two! The sorcerer was angry and upset. "Ah! Ha!" he cried out. "I can't do any magic without my wand! If I remain here for a moment more, I don't know what other mischief this little girl would not do!" He then ran away from the place, cursing Charumati till he turned the corner.

Her parents were full of remorse for what their daughter had done to Mayan, who might have cured her of the tendency to do mischief. They wondered what was in store for Charumati when she grew up if no curb was put on her misdeeds. Soon, word spread about Charumati and people were afraid to call on Kamalnath and Meenakshi or to invite them over to their place.

Meanwhile, Bankura the cheat found his way to Ganeshpuri and searched for the shop of the most prominent jeweller of the place. He posed as if he was a rich trader keen on buying precious stones. At one stage he thought he was alone in front of the counter. He picked up a glittering diamond from the tray and pushed it into the clay figure he was holding in his hand.



An assistant in the shop was actually watching him from a distance and he went and reported the matter to his master. The jeweller rushed back to where Bankura was sitting and grabbed the clay figure from his hand. "You thief!" he shouted at him. "You've hidden a diamond in this figure, haven't you?"

Bankura stoutly denied the allegation. "I have done nothing like that! I haven't stolen your diamond, nor have I hidden it in this figure!"

"You're lying, hey mister!" the jeweller shouted at him. "My assistant was watching you and he saw you removing the diamond from the tray." He then beckoned the assistant.

"Yes, master! I saw him take the

diamond and push it into the figure," said the assistant with confidence.

The jeweller turned to Bankura. "Do you know how much that diamond costs? Five lakhs! I won't let you off that easily. First let me break this clay figure and find out whether the diamond has been hidden in it!"

By then a crowd had gathered in front of the shop. Now Bankura knew that he could not escape. However, he put on some bravado and challenged them. "All right, you may break open the figure and find out whether there's any diamond hidden in it. But I tell you, you won't be able to break the figure. It is not made of clay. It is an alloy and is not breakable!"

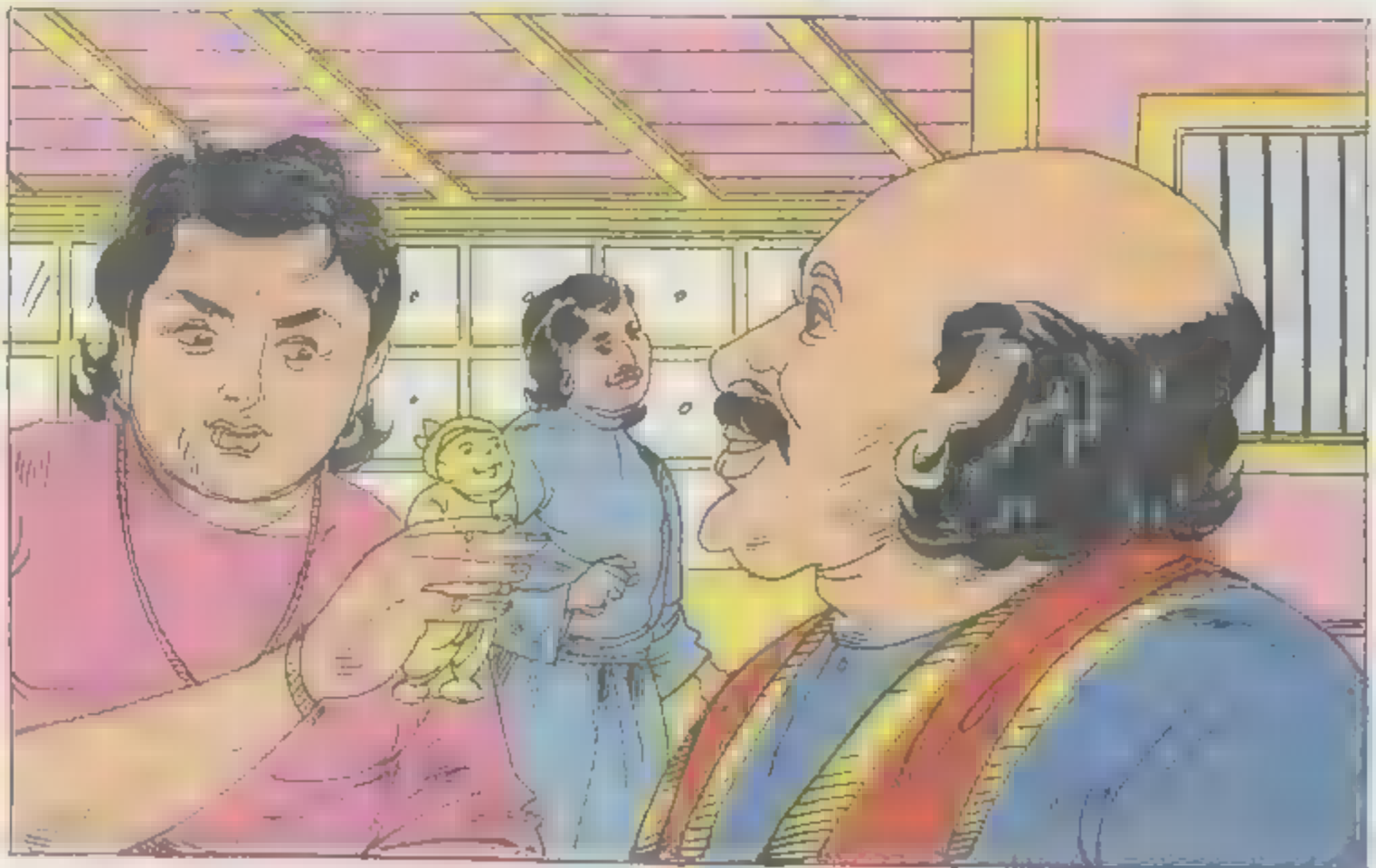
Someone in the crowd came forward. "Sir, this is only clay! See the colour! He's only hoodwinking us

with his gibbering. You don't believe him. Break open the figure!"

However, neither the jeweller, nor his assistant, or anyone in the crowd could break the figure. The man said, "I think he has done some magic to the figure. That's why it's so hard! Anyway, if we can believe your assistant, then you should not return the figure to him. See that he doesn't run away with it."

By now, another person in the crowd came forward and whispered to the jeweller. "There's one person in this town who'll be able to break the figure! Charumati! Daughter of Kamalnath and Meenakshi." He then narrated all that had happened to Mayan and his magic wand.

"There's no doubt that this figure does have the diamond hidden



somewhere inside," said the jeweller. "And whoever is able to break the figure will receive an award of one lakh rupees! I wonder who else this man has cheated at other places!"

Bankura was in no mood to give up." That figure is an heirloom. Nobody can break it. If anyone manages to break it, and if there's no diamond inside, then you'll have to pay me a compensation of ten lakhs rupees!" he warned the jeweller.

"Sure! You need not have any doubt about it!" retorted the jeweller. "I am certain of retrieving my diamond and I shall see that you're put behind bars." He turned to the man from the crowd, "Come on, let's go to Charumati's house. Whoever wants to go with us, let him come. You! Please get up and come with us!" he told Bankura.

They all trooped to Charumati's house. They found her sitting in the porch. When she saw the crowd, she called out to her parents, who now came out. The jeweller introduced himself and told them of the whole incident. "Charumati, take that figure from him," said Kamalnath.

The jeweller handed the figure to the girl, who was now a young maiden. She turned the figure in her hand and threw it on the floor with some force. It broke into several pieces and out came the diamond. It lay glittering in one corner of the porch.

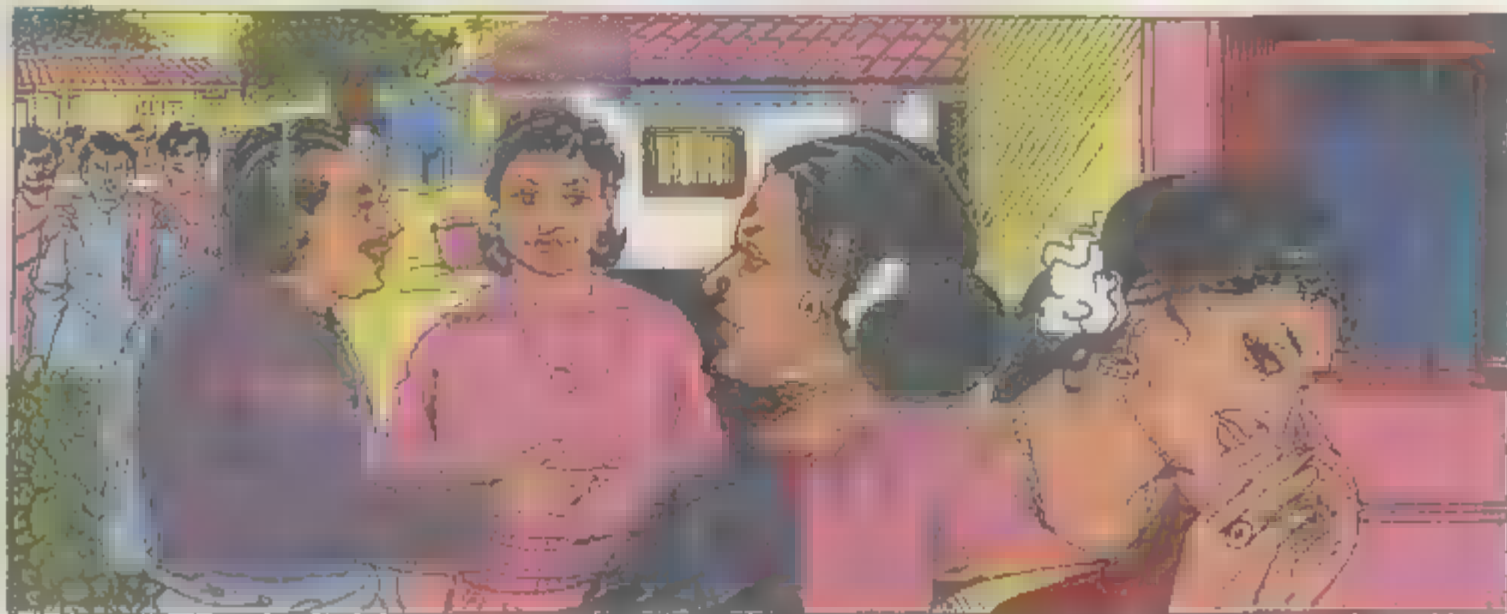
When he saw that the crowd was busy looking at the broken pieces and



the diamond in the jeweller's palm, Bankura slowly moved backwards in a bid to escape. But the jeweller noticed him sneaking out and shouted. "Catch him! Don't allow him to run away."

The people around him caught hold of his hands and held him tight. "Next we shall take him to the authorities and have him put in prison!" said the jeweller. "They'll make him confess to his crimes and probably recover all that he might have stolen from various people. The cheat deserves the maximum punishment."

Before they all moved out with Bankura, the jeweller profusely thanked Charumati who was now beaming in front of her parents.



"People had taken your daughter to be a mischievous girl," remarked the jeweller. "Far from it! I had promised a reward of a lakh of rupees to whoever who could break the clay figure. Now I am offering myself as the reward. I'm unmarried, and I seek your daughter's hands!"

Charumati and Meenakshi looked at each other. "Yes, we too had thought that she was a mischievous girl and was beyond correction," said

Kamalath. "My wife and I were worried how we would find a suitable groom for our daughter. Now your offer of marriage has come as a god-send for us. Charumati's future is no more uncertain. We're so happy."

The jeweller's immediate problem was to hand over Bankura to the authorities which he did with the help of the people who had accompanied him. He then got busy with preparations for his wedding with Charumati.

Few love to hear the sins they love to act.

-Shakespeare

The ear is the road to heart.

-Voltaire

Often a silent face has voice and words.

-Ovid

The outcome gives to deeds their title.

-Goethe

Sports Snippets

Focus ■ Football

Countdown to World Cup

The countdown to World Cup Football has started. Simply titled "FRANCE 98", the first kick off will be on June 10. ■ will, however, be the greatest sports spectacle of the fading century, and the last one, too, because the world will have to wait for the year 2000 to see another, and



that will be the next Olympic Games. It has been estimated that nearly 2,500,000,000 fans all over the world will

be watching the football extravaganza. What has been bothering the organisers is how to distribute 80,000 tickets for the

finals to be held at Saint Denis. There is already a request—with pre-payment—for tickets from 245,924 fans. More than half of them will be disappointed when the ticket money they paid will be returned to them. The stadium at Saint Denis has a capacity of only 80,000. It has been decided that the computer will pick up 1,042,272 names who will be given tickets for some matches of some days. The luckiest ones will be the 80,000 "finalists" who will go to Saint Denis. Incidentally, the printing of the tickets will start only on May 2. Nobody is approaching any astrologer to pick up the champions. According to the progress of betting going on, Brazil are the favourites at 3-1, followed by France 5-1, Germany 6-1, Italy and Argentina 7-1, and England 8-1. At the lowest bottom are Iran 300-1. The whole of France is not thinking of any-

Flying Publicity

The national carrier of France—AIR FRANCE—has painted 16 of its airplanes with the logo of the World Cup and the picture of a player each of all the 32 participating countries shown in their typical jerseys, on either side of the plane.



thing other than Football. However, more than who will turn out to be champions, the fans are eager to know who or which team will give them the best entertainment.

Children and World Cup

France will give an opportunity to boys between 11 and 14 years to prove that they can be future Peles and Platinis—two football fans will never forget. More than 400 promising footballers drawn from 45 countries will show their mettle when they will play at Trocadero and Stade Emile Antoine for the Adidas cup between June 6 and July 12. "This is the right age to start," was the remark of Kevin Keegan, a former England Captain, who is among the organisers of the "football fun and frolic". The young players must be dreaming to become a potential footballer and to play for the World Cup. "It is a good experience and a wonderful chance to play a game which so many people love. If a star comes out of it, that's a bonus," Keegan added, hopefully.

FIFA ratings

By earning 72.28 points, Brazil have been placed on top of the FIFA (International Federation of Football Associations) ratings, which were declared in the third week of April. Germany, with 66.45 points, are placed second. The third and fourth places have gone to the Czech Republic (64.29), and Mexico (60.76). They are followed by England (59.46), Chile (59.15), Argentina (58.98), Yugoslavia (58.12), Spain (57.96) and Morocco (57.91). Favourites Italy are placed at No. 16 with 57.16 points.

Best footballer

For the second year in succession, Ronaldo of Brazil has been awarded the Golden Ball as the best player of 1997. The selection was made by the national coaches of all the 121 member-nations of FIFA. He won 480 points and as many as 86 first votes, while Roberto Carlos—

also of Brazil—who was placed second had only 65 points and just five first votes. Since the award was instituted in 1991, Ronaldo is the first player to win it a second time in succession. The earlier winners were Lothar Mathias of Germany (1991), Marco Van Basten of Holland (1992), Roberto Bagio of Italy (1993), Romario of Brazil (1994), and George

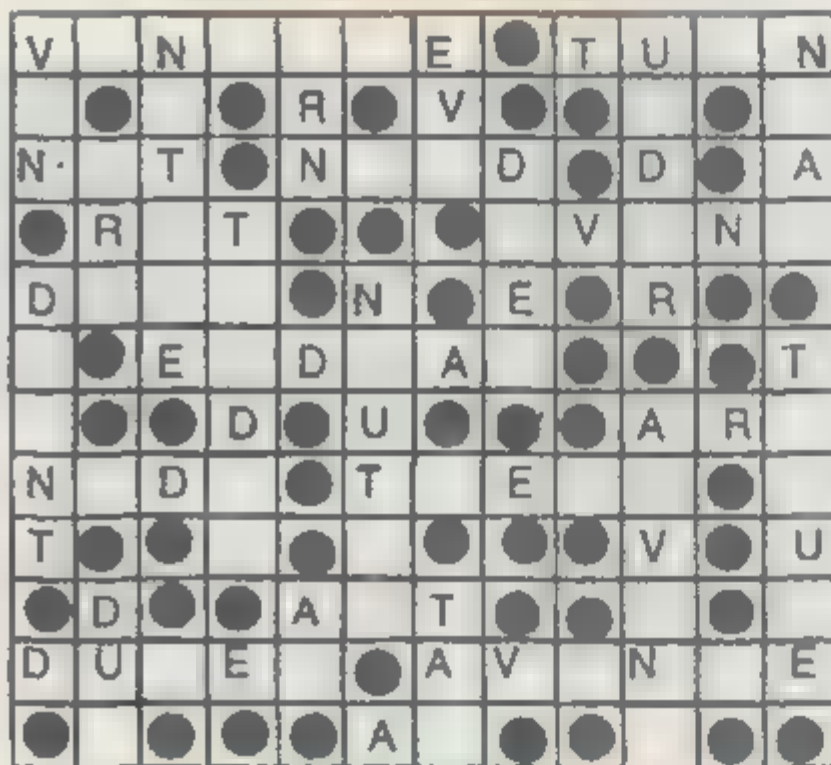


Vea of Liberia (1995). Twenty-one-year old Ronaldo had secured for Brazil the COPA Cup, Youth Cup; and the Junlor Cup; later, the European Cup twice, the world soccer crown, and the Golden Football awarded by FIFA. The former football coach of England, Bobby Robson, marks Ronaldo's excellent body swerve, clever passing, and decisive finishing as his finer points. He now plays for the Inter Milan Club of Italy, which bought him from Barcelona Club of Spain two years ago for Rs. 135 crores! A world record for any sportsman. The Golden Ball was handed to him at a ceremony attended by football greats like Pele (See picture), Beckenbauer, and Bobby Charlton.

Exchange for meat

Jini Petrosani, a football club of Romania, was badly in need of money, and exchanged a player for two tonnes of meat! The club later sold it and with that money paid the salaries of its other players. The club had earlier sold a player to buy 10 footballs, and a set of shirts and shorts!

Find 31 words from the single word
'ADVENTURE'

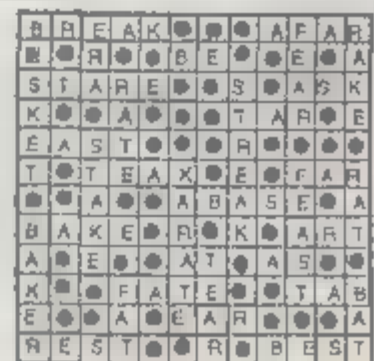


Clues

- 2 letter words - 2
- 3 letter words - 10
- 4 letter words - 6
- 5 letter words - 5
- 6 letter words - 7
- 7 letter words - 1

Total words - 31

Solution

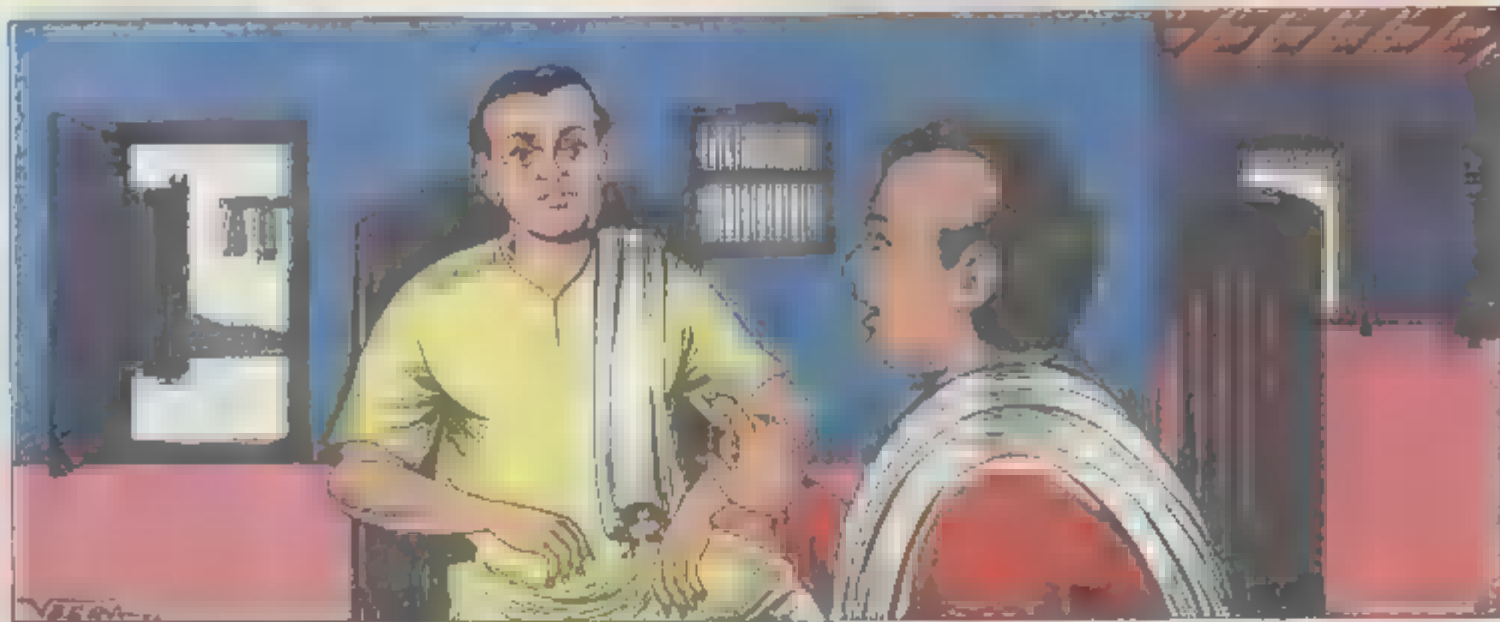


CROSSWORD

P. S. Kumar

Using the picture clues make connecting words.

TASTE UNDER TEST



Anantram's sweet shop was once famous. The delicacies he prepared were very tasty and the shop attracted many customers. Kaveri was his only daughter, and everybody knew, whoever married her would inherit the shop. Small wonder there were many suitors to her hand.

Anantram, too, was anxious that his would-be son-in-law should be a good match for his daughter. He came to know of Gopinath, son of Gokuldas. He made discreet enquiries about the boy and after satisfying himself in all respects, he called on Gokuldas. He listened to Anantram's proposal. Before he gave his final nod, Anantram put forth a strange condition. "Our astrologer has advised us to invite the prospective bridegroom for a meal before taking a final decision. So, I

would request you to send your son to our house to partake of a meal."

Now, Gokuldas had heard of the popularity of the sweets prepared and sold by Anantram. He guessed that the other items prepared in his house must be equally tasty. He decided, let his son go and enjoy a meal; there was no harm. Accordingly, his son one day went over to Anantram's house. The boy was welcomed with great affection. He and Anantram spent some time in conversation and then led him to the dining room where they sat for lunch. The meal over, the boy was about to take leave of Anantram, when he said: "I'm afraid, you won't be a good match for my daughter. You may tell this to your father. Please request him to forgive me if I have caused any inconvenience."

Gokuldas's son was not the only suitor who had to undergo this strange test. He sent all of them back with similar remarks. However, he did not explain why he found them unsuitable.

One day, his friend Hirachand visited Anantram and found fault with his behaviour. "You should not have invited your prospective bridegrooms to your house. That is against our custom. Moreover, after inviting them for a meal and after their accepting your invitation, you should not have sent them back without telling them what shortcomings you had found in them. Tell me, what's the purpose of this test?"

Anantram merely smiled. "Bear with me, my friend. I've promised my astrologer that I would not disclose the purpose. Have patience!"

"All right," said Hirachand. "You know I've a sister in Shivpuri. Her son, I personally feel, is suitable for your daughter. But would you insist on my nephew, too, undergoing this test? Can't you exempt him from coming here and partaking of a meal?"

"But that's the condition stipulated by my astrologer," said Anantram apologetically. "I shall go with you to Shivpuri and meet your sister and son and invite him for a meal."

The next day, the friends went to Shivpuri and invited the boy to Anantram's house. He left the uncle and nephew in Hirachand's place and



asked him also to join them at lunch.

When Hirachand and nephew arrived, Anantram received them with courtesy. They remained talking for a long time. Hirachand became impatient. "Isn't the meal ready as yet?" he enquired. "I'm feeling hungry."

"I'm organising a feast, that's why it's taking time," said Anantram. "Could I call for some drink, while we wait?"

"No, please," said the young man. "I don't take a drink before my meal. You may give a drink to my uncle, if he has no objection."

Hirachand, too, declined to have a drink. Soon the meal was ready. As they sat for food, the young man remarked that the quantity served of



each item was too much for him. He wanted some part of it taken away before he started eating. "I don't like to waste food, and I'm not in the habit of eating in between meals."

Kaveri, who was serving the food, removed a part of it just as he had wanted. The young man presented a clean leaf in no time and waited for his uncle to finish his food and join him in the porch.

Anantram went up to them with *pansupari* on a tray. "How was the meal?" he asked the young man. "You did not ask for a second helping."

The boy then told him what he found missing in taste in every item.

Anantram threw up his hands. "There's no doubt, my friend," he told Hirachand, "that your nephew will be an ideal husband to my daughter. I almost heard my astrologer whisper so into my ears!"

"I don't believe all that!" said Hirachand. "Tell me, what's your impression about my nephew?"

"Whoever owns a sweet shop should not be one who would keep on munching as he attended to sales," said Anantram. "Your nephew that way is a disciplined boy and he follows certain rules about his own food. I'm accepting him as my future son-in-law."

■ The more a man denies himself, the more he shall obtain from god.

- Horace

■ Never learn to do anything; if you don't learn, you'll always find someone else to do it for you.

- Mark Twain



- ❑ ***Is it true that travellers on camels riding through deserts kill the animals and drink the water stored in some parts of the body to quench their thirst?***

— *Prakash Agrawal, Calcutta*

It is just a myth, and there is no truth in it. In fact, the camel does not have a part where it can stock the water they drink. However, when the riders are driven to thirst and they cannot find any source from where they can quench their thirst, they save their lives by killing the animal and open up its stomach and take out some liquid that would have been left there after digestion. Men have found that this is no poisonous substance.

- ❑ ***Do lemurs worship the sun ?***

— *Vimsati Das, Bhubaneshwar*

Lemurs are rare animals found only in Madagascar, an island near the African coast. Their face resembles that of the fox and their body is like the monkey's. The aborigin islanders treat them as divine creatures. There are forty different kinds of lemurs in Madagascar itself. The Ruffed Lemurs are often seen staring at the sun for long hours. This phenomenon has prompted the tribals to declare the animals as sun-worshippers! Strangely, the word lemur means Satan! The variety called Woolly lemurs also have been attributed with divine powers. The leaves of the particular kind of tree which the animals have made their habitat are believed to have medicinal properties. The grey coloured Ring-tailed lemurs are an exception. They live in the open, whereas all other types love to reside among thick foliage. One thing common with all lemurs is that they sleep during the day and search for food only in the night. Most of the varieties are herbivorous.

- ❑ ***Can elephants climb hills and mountains?***

— *Saraswati Pande, Kolhapur*

Yes, they can easily climb hillocks and small mountains. This is evident because we find elephants living in jungles and forests in mountainous terrain. In the Kilimanjaro mountain ranges in Tanzania, climbers have come across footprints of elephants at 4,750 metres height. This could be a record.

- ❑ ***I have heard of birds capable of spitting, but I do not have details.***

— *Rajani Balaram, Bangalore*

The variety called Fulmor are often heard to make a cry like "Phphooo". It comes when it actually spits, and this is to drive away potential enemies. Their spit has an awful smell!



PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



V. Peppin Mary



A. Krishnaveni

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other? You may write it on an ordinary post card and mail it to Photo Caption Contest, Chandamama, Vadapalani, Madras - 600 026, to reach us by the 25th of the current month. A reward of Rs. 100/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the Issue after the next.

The Prize for January 1998 goes to :-

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